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ALEXIS SANCHEZ, FALCAO AND THE BIGGEST MOVES SO FAR

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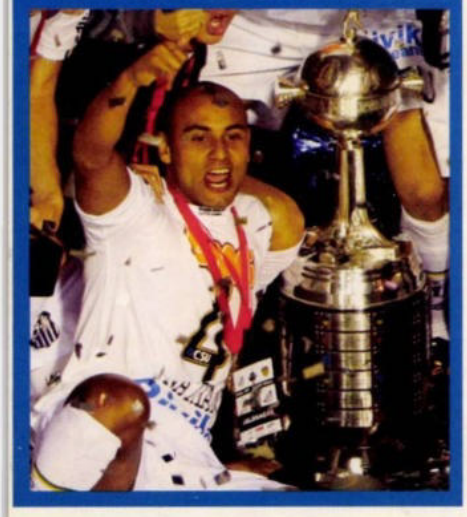

MATCH FIXING

The scandals at the heart of football

THE NEXT GENERATION

Names to watch from the Euro Under-21s

PLUS

- Gold Cup
- Michael Ballack
- Antonio Di Natale
- Sven Goran Eriksson
- Barcelona 1992 Dream Team

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

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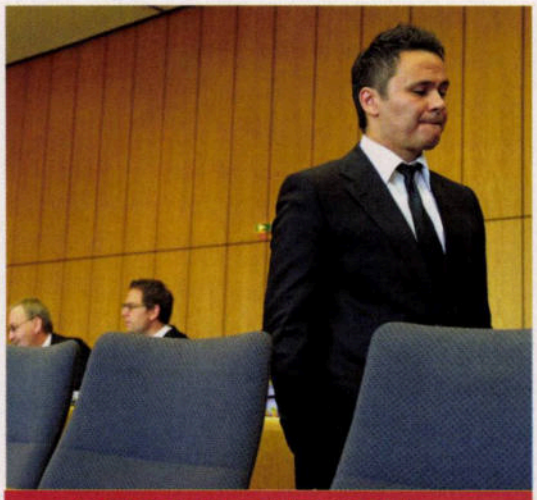
Contents



SPECIAL REPORT

22 **Match fixing: a worldwide problem**
Despite the jailing of notorious fixer Ante Sapina, new betting scandals continue to emerge

30

Dispatches

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

30 **Argentina** River Plate are relegated for first time
32 **South Africa** one year on from the World Cup
33 **USA** Mexico triumph in the CONCACAF Gold Cup
34 **Brazil** Santos victorious in the Libertadores Cup
36 **Switzerland** the rise of foreign ownership
37 **Spain** the Italians behind Granada's promotion
38 **Trinidad & Tobago** the end for Jack Warner?
40 **Bosnia-Herzegovina** political problems remain
41 **Azerbaijan** celebrating 100 years of football
42 **France** Lille do the double as Monaco go down

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
8 **From the editor**
10 **Barcelona buys** Sanchez is top transfer target
13 **Jim Holden** young English talent costs too much
14 **Michael Ballack** Germany captain cast out
15 **Paul Gardner** encroaching problem at penalties
16 **Ins & Outs** players and coaches on the move
18 **Brian Glanville** the net is closing in on Blatter

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

46 **Javier Hernandez**
Profile of the Manchester United and Mexico striker, featuring a unique guide to his playing career

TACTICS

52 **The fear of failure**
Why club football is overtaking the international game

FACE TO FACE

We talk to football's biggest stars

54 **Mohamed Aboutraika**
56 **Sven Goran Eriksson**

CLUB FOCUS

58 **Santos**
South America's top club side

TALENT SCOUT

64 **Tomorrow's stars today**

SPOTLIGHT

68 **Sweden**
Europe's most open top-flight championship

INSIDER

74 **How Warner hung on**
Keir Radnedge on FIFA's complacency

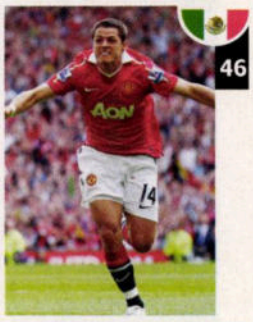
6 OF THE BEST

76 **Libertadores Cup stars**

THE GREAT TEAMS

114 **Barcelona 1992**

10



46

56

64

114

World Service

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84 Internationals
92 Preview
93 Digest
107 Club Results

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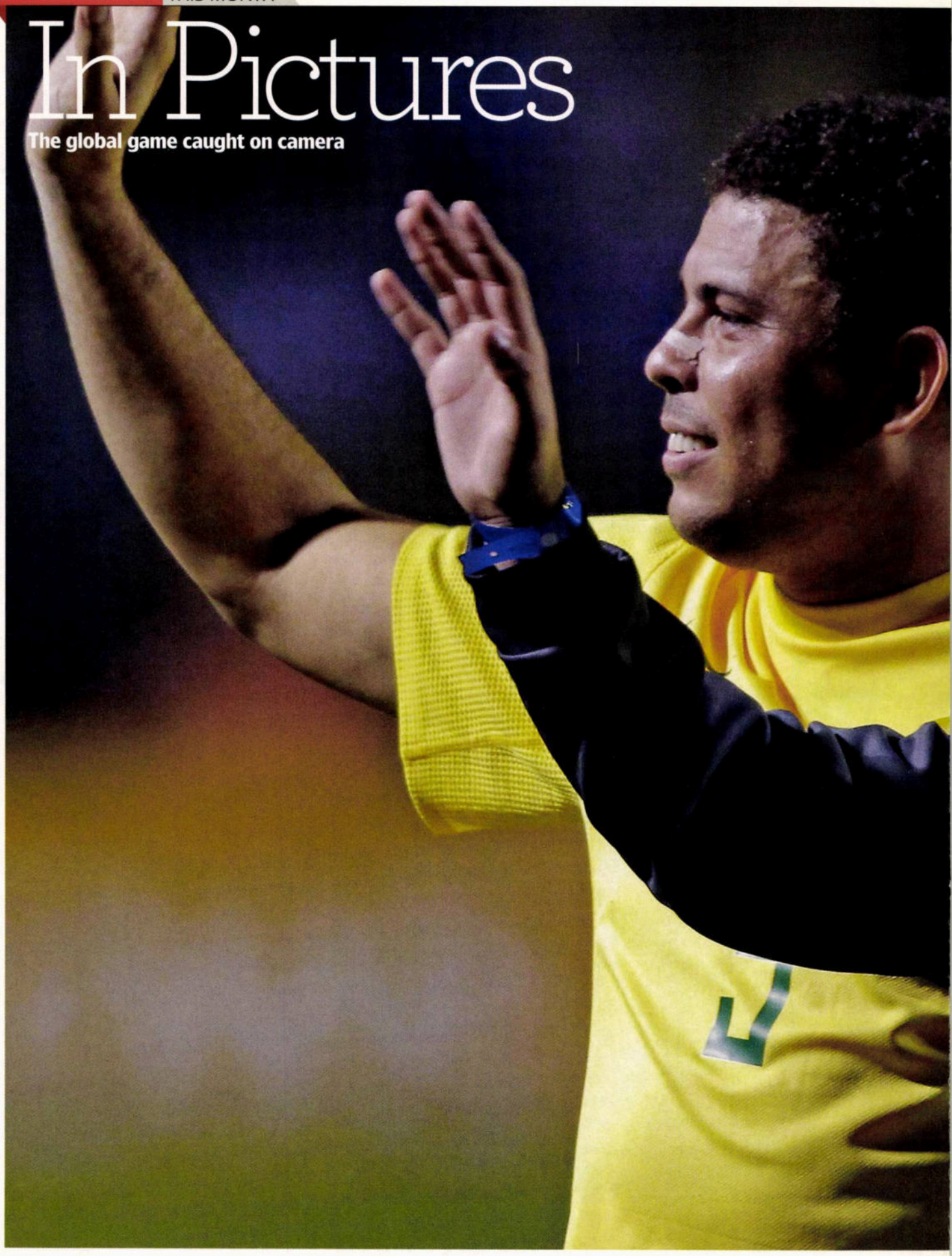
In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

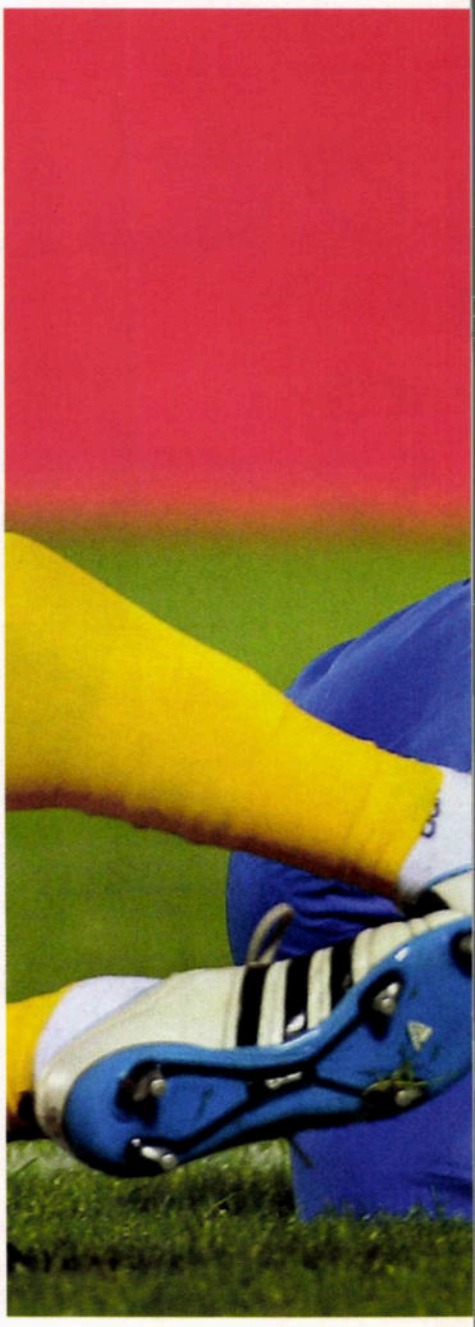


BRAZIL...an emotional goodbye as Brazil legend Ronaldo, accompanied by his son, wave farewell in what was his last ever professional appearance, in a friendly international against Romania

USA...the unusual setting of Baseball stadium Citi Field in New York City plays host to a friendly between Ecuador and Greece

JAPAN...Eiji Kawashima (left) and Masahiko Inoha look on anxiously in the Kirin Cup tie with Czech Republic

FRANCE...Italy Under-21's Luca Marrone and Riccardo Saponara compete with Drissa Traore of Ivory Coast's Under-21s



ITALY...Atalanta supporters take to the streets of Bergamo to protest against their team being named by police in a match-fixing scandal in Serie B last year

UKRAINE...Tempers flare in the Ukrainian Cup Final between rivals Shakhtar Donetsk and Dynamo Kiev

ROMANIA...Bosnia's Edin Dzeko feels the full force of a Romania defender during a Euro qualifier in Bucharest

FROM THE EDITOR

"FIFA would lose all credibility if fans no longer believe in what is known in Great Britain as the beautiful game. It's not enough to go against corruption and bad behaviour on the field of play, [with] red cards and yellow cards. We also have to look at those who try to destroy our game."

No, Sepp Blatter wasn't talking about Jack Warner and Mohamed Bin Hammam, two of the most powerful men in world football who are embroiled in FIFA's worst corruption scandal.

Instead, he was referring to match fixing, which continues to spread like a damaging virus through the game. We report on the latest examples of corruption (page 22) and how FIFA will pay Interpol around £17million over the next 10 years to help tackle illegal gambling in Asia. A long overdue recognition of the problem by FIFA, but it's worth remembering that FIFA executive committee members and directors paid themselves a £20m "bonus" last year, up from £12m the previous year. Such are the priorities in Blatterland.

> Match fixing continues to spread like a damaging virus through the game

Back in the real world, there's been plenty of football to write about, including the Libertadores Cup, Gold Cup and European Under-21s. So much for a summer break.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1. FIFA has "comprehensive, convincing and overwhelming evidence" of bribery by Jack Warner and Mohamed Bin Hammam ➤ Pages 38 &74
2. Italy and South Korea hit by match-fixing scandals ➤ Page 22
3. Spain win the European Under-21 Championship ➤ Page 102
4. Santos win their third Libertadores Cup, 49 years after their second ➤ Pages 34 & 58
5. River Plate relegated in Argentina ➤ Page 30
6. Javier Hernandez stars as Mexico win the Gold Cup ➤ Pages 33 & 46
7. The 2014 World Cup qualifying campaign kicks off, with Belize-Montserrat the first of 830 matches ➤ Page 13
8. Andre Villas-Boas hired as the new manager of Chelsea ➤ Pages 9 & 19
9. Barcelona close in on transfer target Alexis Sanchez ➤ Page 10
10. After 34 years in the French top flight, Monaco are relegated from Ligue 1 ➤ Page 42

SWITZERLAND

Warner walks free, Bin Hammam risks life ban

Gone...Warner

Evidence... Bin Hammam

A leaked FIFA ethics committee report has declared the existence of "comprehensive, convincing and overwhelming evidence" that Jack Warner and Mohamed Bin Hammam colluded in the payment of bribes to Caribbean football officials before the recent FIFA presidential election.

Jack Warner quit all football at FIFA and CONCACAF ahead of the publication of the report, which had been expected to find both men guilty of corruption. His resignation prompted FIFA to drop an investigation into bribery allegations.

"As a consequence of Mr Warner's self-determined resignation all ethics committee procedures against him have been closed and the presumption of innocence is maintained," a FIFA statement said. It was also reported that Warner will receive a FIFA pension of £23,000 a year for the next 28 years, the length of his service on the ExCo.

In contrast, Mohamed Bin Hammam has insisted he will fight the bribery charges. He now risks a life ban from all football activities if found guilty by an independent investigation.

ARGENTINA

'El Loco' bows out

Boca Juniors striker Martin Palermo has insisted he will not go back on his decision to retire at the age of 37.

Palermo played more than 300 games for Boca, scoring almost 200 goals in two spells either side of a period in Spain, where he played for Villarreal, Real Betis and Alaves.

Nicknamed *"El Loco"*, he also scored nine goals in 15 appearances for Argentina.

Local hero...Palermo

"These are the dictators and colonialists who want to impose their lifestyle on others"

Iran president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on FIFA officials who banned his country's women's team when they refused to play without their Islamic dress and headscarves

Europa League winners... Villas-Boas (left) and Falcao

PORTUGAL

Porto fight to stop Falcao following Villas-Boas to Chelsea

Europa League winners Porto have insisted that Colombia forward Radamel Falcao will only be allowed to leave the Portuguese club if a buyer pays his £26million release clause in full.

Porto were left smarting after Andre Villas-Boas, having previously declared his intention to stay, instead opted to move to Chelsea.

The Portuguese champions were powerless to prevent 33-year-old Villas-Boas from agreeing a three-year deal with the big-spending Premier League outfit once they had agreed to pay the £13.5m buyout clause in his contract.

The deal to sign Villas-Boas took Roman Abramovich's spending on the hiring and firing of coaching staff to more than £60m in seven years.

Porto president Jorge Pinto da Costa, who replaced Villas-Boas with his assistant, Vitor Pereira, claims the club is under no pressure to sell Falcao and his Brazilian strike partner Hulk.

Falcao would be a more likely departure than Hulk because his buyout clause is £26.5m, compared to Hulk's prohibitive £87million.

Falcao has switched agents, hiring Jorge Mendes, who represents many of Portugal's top football names, including Cristiano Ronaldo and Jose Mourinho.

HEROES & VILLAINS

Half century... Keane

ROBBIE KEANE

Scored his 50th and 51st goals for the Republic of Ireland in their 2-0 Euro 2012 qualifying win against Macedonia.

TAKAYUKI SUZUKI

Japan's former World Cup striker promised to play for free next season for J.League second division side Mito Hollyhock. The club from Ibaraki Prefecture, north of Tokyo, is facing financial difficulties following the earthquake and tsunami in March.

DEON MCCAULEY

Scored the first-ever international hat-trick by a Belize player in their 5-2 victory over Montserrat in Trinidad – the first qualifying game for the 2014 World Cup.

Long wait...Kalinic

NIKOLA KALINIC

Scored Croatia's winner in a 2-1 victory over Georgia to end his country's 16-year wait for a victory at the Poljud stadium in Split.

ALEX McLEISH

Walked out on Birmingham City, who he took down into the Championship, and walked straight into the manager's seat at Premier League arch-rivals Aston Villa.

Miss...Eto'o

SAMUEL ETO'O

His injury-time penalty hit the bar with the score at 0-0 in the African Nations Cup qualifier at home to Senegal. The miss is likely to cost Cameroon any chance they have of reaching the finals next year.

Quit threat...Roberto Carlos (centre)

KRYLYA SOVETOV FANS

Roberto Carlos vowed to quit football if there is a repeat of the incident at Krylya Sovetov where a banana was hurled towards the Anzhi Makhachkala captain.

PLACIDO DOMINGO

Quite why FIFA president Sepp Blatter suggested that the Spanish opera star might assist in rooting out corruption and help with the auditing of corporate governance procedure is anyone's guess.

"We're not going to tolerate this sort of mud-slinging. If the provocation continues, we're ready to break off relations with Real"

Barcelona president Sandro Rosell warns Madrid against claiming the Catalan club receives preferential treatment, has racist players and use performance-enhancing drugs

SPAIN

Barcelona see Sanchez as the solution to small-squad syndrome

For Giuseppe Rossi, it started as a dream, appeared to become a reality, then ended up as a nightmare. And for some Barcelona fans the outcome was not as they had hoped, either. They had been excited about the prospect of Rossi arriving at Camp Nou. For a while, it seemed just a matter of time. Instead, his agent admitted there was little chance of the Italian-American moving on after Villarreal rejected an initial bid and Barca turned their attention elsewhere.

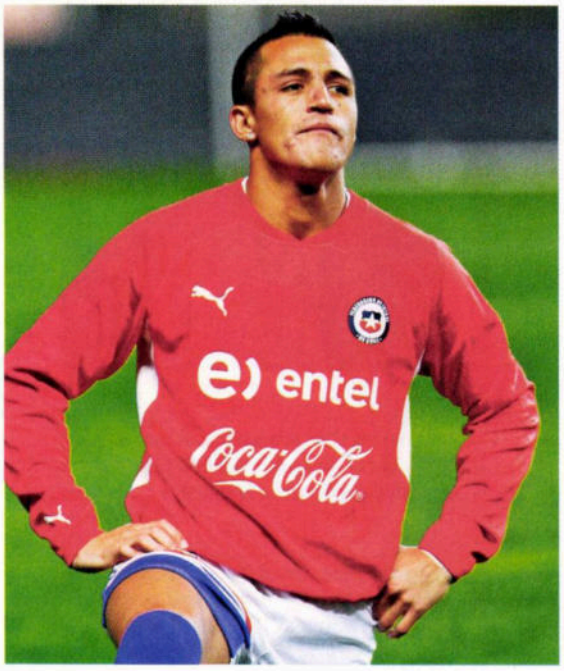
So, instead of Rossi, they turned their attention to Alexis Sanchez of Udinese, who, at press time, was set to become the first Chilean to join the club.

Bit by bit the initial sense of being underwhelmed is being overcome. Barca fans knew Rossi could perform; in fact, they had suffered as he scored goals for Villarreal and he appeared to be the perfect match for Barcelona: technically gifted, swift, able to play beyond the defensive line and also drop deeper to be involved in the build-up, happy to push wide and create space. A deadly finisher but a team player too.

They had seen little of Sanchez and were not sure that he was that good. But soon the profiles rolled in. Here, they were told, was a special talent, the outstanding player in Italy over the last season who was quick, skilful and almost unstoppable one on one. Creative and able to score goals, he hit 12 in 27 games last season. Comparisons had even been drawn with Cristiano Ronaldo. Further hope came with the news that Barcelona looked likely to beat Manchester City to his signature.

For Villarreal, resistance was easier because Rossi – whose gratitude to the "Yellow Submarine" remains strong following their treatment of him, especially in the aftermath of his father's death - refused to rebel. Sanchez, in contrast, pushed hard. His refusal to countenance a move to anywhere other than Barca helped force Udinese's hand and he was given special dispensation to leave Chile's squad at the Copa America.

Giampollo Pozzo, the Udinese owner, talked of a fee in the region of £44m, but his son Gino set about building a deal satisfactory to all sides. Ultimately, it could be worth around £36m. Pozzo junior said: "We are trying to fulfil the player's desire; it is understandable that he should want to go to Barcelona."



Presence...Barcelona believe Sanchez will offer Guardiola the alternatives he seeks in the coming season

In the end, they agreed a £25m basic fee plus a further £4.5m in objectives and a player exchange – with Barcelona offering Jeffren and Jonathan Soriano among others. For the Pozzos there was the advantage of being able to use them either for Udinese or their other concern, recently promoted Spanish club Granada.

Now the question being asked at Barcelona is where, exactly, does Sanchez fit in and who misses out?

Despite a significant dip midway through the season, David Villa ultimately enjoyed a successful first campaign – ending with a wonderful goal in the Champions League Final. The coaching staff believed his role is very different to the one he had at Valencia, and his first season was bound to be hard, but that he had learnt the Barcelona way. As for Pedro, he had definitively proved his worth.

Sanchez's style is different - more individualistic, more direct. His explosion at Udinese had coincided with a move to a free role behind the strikers rather than wide on the right, cutting in, as he had done before and that means Leo Messi's position...

But judging Barcelona by focusing only on their starting XI is short-sighted. Pep Guardiola knows he needs to build a bigger squad in a season in which Barca will be fighting on six fronts. It will begin with the Super Cup against Real Madrid, less than three weeks after Messi finishes the Copa America, and end with the European Championship – at which Barcelona are likely to supply at least seven players to the Spain team.

Guardiola is conscious of the need to evolve and offer something different while maintaining the basic approach; it means having alternatives. It also means not just buying every player available. Rossi appeared to be the result of that search, but Sanchez is the solution.

Sid Lowe

THE SUMMER'S BIGGEST DONE DEALS SO FAR...

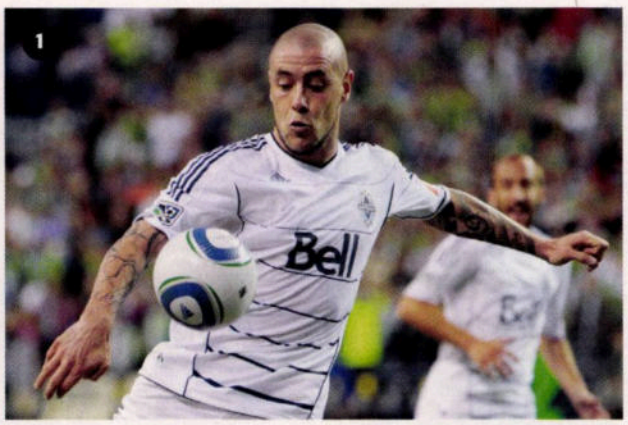
Jordan Henderson	Sunderland to Liverpool	**£20million**
Phil Jones	Blackburn Rovers to Manchester United	**£16m**
Manuel Neuer	Schalke to Bayern Munich	**£16m**
Ashley Young	Aston Villa to Manchester United	**£15m**
Alessandro Matri	Cagliari to Juventus	**£13.8m**
Kevin Gameiro	Lorient to Paris Saint-Germain	**£10m**
Jeremy Toulalan	Lyon to Malaga	**£10m**
Fabio Quagliarella	Napoli to Juventus	**£9.4m**

"The future of the MLS is very bright – and it would be even more so with less strict financial rules"

New York Red Bulls' Thierry Henry calls for a rethink of the US league's designated-player concept and salary cap

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see clips of these goals, visit **www.worldsoccer.com**



1 ERIC HASSLI, VANCOUVER WHITECAPS v SEATTLE SOUNDERS
A stunning volley that leaves goalkeeper Kasey Keller clutching at thin air.

2 JONATHAN FABBRO, CERRO PORTENO v SANTOS
Some neat footwork to beat his markers before a right-footed dipping shot into the top corner.

3 STEVEN JOSEPH-MONROSE, FRANCE UNDER-21S v CHINA U21S
Shows superb technique to produce a volley on the turn during the Toulon Under-21 tournament in France.

3 OMAR DALEY, JAMAICA v GRENADA
Thunders home a left-footed shot following some fine build-up play.

5 ANDRES GUARDADO, MEXICO v COSTA RICA
Executes a left-footed volley from the corner of the penalty area.

6 ALAIN ROCHAT, VANCOUVER WHITECAPS v PHILADELPHIA UNION
Worth watching for the four step-overs in the assist from AJ DeLaGarza as much as the swerving shot from Rochat.

GOALKEEPER
Victor Valdes (Barcelona)
DEFENDERS
Dani Alves (Barcelona)
Mats Hummels (Borussia Dortmund)
Nemanja Vidic (Manchester United)
Gerard Pique (Barcelona)
MIDFIELDERS
Xavi Hernandez (Barcelona)
Andres Iniesta (Barcelona)
Nuri Sahin (Borussia Dortmund)
FORWARDS
Lionel Messi (Barcelona)
Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid)
Samuel Eto'o (Internazionale)

ESM

Barcelona dominate ESM XI Team of the Season

Barcelona players feature in six of the 11 positions in the ESM Team of the Season, based on the individual votes received during 2010-11.

Keeper Victor Valdes, defenders Dani Alves and Gerard Pique, midfielders Xavi and Andres Iniesta, and forward Lionel Messi all featured in the starting XI. However, it was not a Barca whitewash.

Dortmund's Mats Hummels and Nuri Sahin also feature, along with Manchester United defender Nemanja Vidic, Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo and Inter's Samuel Eto'o.

● *Full list of votes, see page 106*

WINNERS

LIECHTENSTEIN
Their 2-0 Euro qualifying victory over Lithuania was the country's first competitive win in nearly four years – and only their eighth in 123 competitive games.

GERMANY, HOLLAND & SPAIN
These three are the only teams to still have 100 per cent records in the Euro 2012 qualifiers.

KENNY SHIELS
Given the full-time job as Kilmarnock manager despite failing to win a single one of his eight games as caretaker at the end of last season.

LUCIANO MOGGI
Juventus' former general manager, banned for five years after a match-fixing scandal in 2006, had his ban extended to life.

ENGLAND UNDER-21S
Crashed out of UEFA Under-21 Championship in the group stage without winning a game.

AJAX CAPE TOWN
Missed out on a first South African league title after blowing a 2-0 lead on the final day of the season.

LOSERS

"I definitely think I'm good enough to play for Manchester United"

100metres world record holder Usain Bolt

ITALY

Top scorer Di Natale vows to stay with Udinese

It was not what one expected. Last summer, two days before the curtain was due to rise on the new Serie A season, Udinese striker Antonio Di Natale said no to Juventus. The two clubs had concluded their deal and everything was in place when "Toto" sprang his bombshell and basically said that he was just fine where he was.

With the benefit of hindsight, you have to say Di Natale called it just right. While Juve went on to record their worst season for 20 years – seventh in the league and out of all European competition – Serie A's leading goalscorer in the 2009-2010 season staged a repeat performance, netting 28 for a Udinese side which qualified for the Champions League.

Given that Di Natale was 32 going on 33 at the time he declined the move, you could also say he had clearly and definitively opted out of the "big time". Yet this is part of his mindset. In a revealing interview with Italian fashion magazine *Max*, he explained: "When you have given your word, then that's it. I like to say I've followed in the footsteps of Del Piero and Totti in that I have become a club symbol."

Di Natale obviously preferred being where he felt appreciated by the fans. Lest we fail to understand, he added: "I could never live with a movie star, showgirl-type woman...I much prefer a quiet woman, someone who is reserved like my wife. She [Ilena] is a woman of sound values, someone who has done a great job with our two kids [Filippo and Diletta]...we chose one another because we are reserved people."

Reserved off the pitch he might be, but on it he has been rampaging through Serie A defences for the last two seasons, scoring 57 goals and becoming the first player to top the charts in successive seasons since Lazio's Beppe Signori in 1993 and 1994.

Born in Naples in October 1977, the son of a bricklayer (with whom he sometimes worked), Di Natale had to claw his way up the football ladder, starting his professional career in Serie B as an 18-year-old with Empoli. After spells with third division sides such as Iperzola, Viareggio and Varese, he returned to his alma mater in the 1999-2000 season.

Keeping it in the family...Di Natale celebrates Udinese qualifying for the Champions League with daughter Diletta and son Filippo

Thirteen goals in Serie A for Empoli in 2002-2003 marked the breakthrough. Within a year he had moved on to Udinese, where, significantly, in his first season, his attacking partnership with Vincenzo Iaquinta and David Di Michele was so effective that the club earned their first Champions League qualification.

By then, Di Natale had established himself in the national squad. Given his debut by Giovanni Trapattoni against Turkey in November 2002, Di Natale now has 36 caps. Although not part of Cesare Prandelli's current set-up, he had a good run under Roberto Donadoni and was part of the side eliminated at the Euro 2008 finals by Spain in a penalty shoot-out. Recalling the pain of missing his spot-kick, Di Natale says: "My whole life seemed to flash past my eyes and I thought to myself, 'Oh God, now I will have to go back to being a bricklayer'."

His international run finally came to an end in South Africa last year where he was a member of Marcello Lippi's ill-fated squad, scoring a goal in that decisive 3-2 group stage defeat by Slovakia.

For the time being, however, his thoughts are focused on the Champions League. Given Udinese's perennial temptation to sell their best players, will they be less than competitive next season if they cash in on Chile winger Alexis Sanchez, Ghana midfielder Kwadwo Asamoah and Switzerland midfielder Goklan Inler?

Di Natale thinks not, telling *Gazzetta Dello Sport*: "I have huge trust in [coach Francesco] Guidolin and in the Pozzi family who have always done great things with the club. Sure I wish that all our squad could stay, but I know that, unfortunately, is not possible."

One departure that clearly will weigh heavily on him is that of Sanchez, who seems destined for Barcelona. He and Sanchez – they both stand just 5ft 7in – destroyed Serie A defences all season. Yet even without his team-mate, Di Natale can still make defences suffer, both in Serie A and the Champions League.

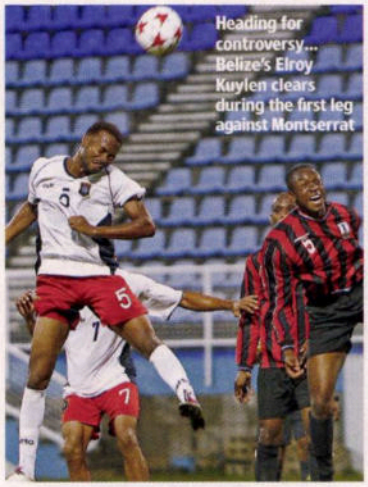
Paddy Agnew

"The title Milan won this season is the first real scudetto since 2006"

Fabio Capello dismisses Internazionale's last four titles

■ BELIZE

Belize threatened with World Cup expulsion



Heading for controversy... Belize's Elroy Kuylen clears during the first leg against Montserrat

Belize could be kicked out of the 2014 World Cup qualifiers despite winning their opening match - the first of 832 to decide the 32 teams that qualify for Brazil.

A 5-2 victory over the British Caribbean colony of Montserrat put Belize in a commanding position for the second leg, at home in Belmopan on June 18, but it never went ahead after a political bust-up.

The Belize government de-recognised the Football Federation of Belize (FFB) on June 8 in what its president, Dr Bertie Chimilio, claimed to *World Soccer* was a long-running personal "witch-hunt". He said: "The Ministry of Sports has for some years tried to remove me from office."

When the Montserrat team arrived for the second leg, the government refused to provide security for the match and the FFB was suspended by FIFA.

The FFB need their suspension lifted and the second leg played by July 10 or Belize will be kicked out and Montserrat, who have never won an international fixture, would get a walkover into the next round.

However, getting the Montserrat team back together in time could be problematic as only five players come from the island. The other 13 are based in the UK, but manager Kenny Dyer believes the tie is not over.

"We played very well," said Dyer. "Three goalkeeping errors cost us the game."

Steve Menary

Jim HOLDEN

AT THE HEART OF THE GAME

English clubs operate in a parallel transfer market

The young Spaniard was a delight to watch at the European Under-21 Championship finals. His dancing feet thrilled the crowds, his range of passing was fabulous, and there was electricity in the air whenever he was on the ball.

But it's no surprise that Thiago Alcantara is yet another graduate of Barcelona's La Masia academy, or that he is the son of a former Brazil international, Mazinho.

No, the astonishing information, to English ears, is that this 20-year-old midfielder of diamond-hard talent might be available for as little as £7million.

Thiago is stuck behind the superstars of Camp Nou, hence the audacious hope from mid-ranking Premier League club Bolton Wanderers that they might capture him in a deal that would allow Barca first option to take him back, but also give the youngster immediate regular first-team football.

This was one of many thousands of transfer possibilities being mulled over by the clubs of Europe, large, medium and small during pre-season. But this one had football common sense at its heart. It had financial good sense, too.

That, sadly, is an increasingly rare commodity among too many English clubs, who spend absurdly vast sums on middling players thanks to the riches of the Premier League TV deal.

An easy, but nevertheless compelling, contrast was evident at the same European Under-21 tournament.

In their opening group match, Thiago's Spain side faced England. In direct opposition was Jordan Henderson, another 20-year-old midfielder, who a few days previously had left Sunderland for Liverpool in a barely credible £20m transfer.

Henderson is a decent player in the typical English mould. He had a good season for Sunderland and won a senior England cap in an experimental friendly against France – in which he looked out of his depth.

It was the same against Thiago, where Henderson spent most of the game chasing shadows. He didn't improve in the tournament and was substituted in the final group game, in which a last-gasp defeat by the Czech Republic meant an early exit.

Henderson's fee represents a monumental financial gamble by Liverpool – just as risky as the £35m they paid to sign young England striker Andy Carroll from Newcastle United in January. Henderson can hardly even be guaranteed a place in the Liverpool first team in his best position when the rivals are Steven Gerrard, Raul Meireles and Lucas Leiva.

Every transfer, of course, is a matter of judgement. Perhaps Liverpool's valuations will, in time, be viewed as wise business. For these kinds of sums, they will need to be, but right now they appear reckless spending.

Another contrast is the £9m deal that took midfielder Nuri Sahin from Borussia Dortmund to Real Madrid. He is 22, has 26 caps for Turkey and was a key player in his side's Bundesliga title-winning season.

Sahin has pedigree and success. Like Henderson, he may find it hard to command consistent first-team action at his new club, but there is no doubt he represents value for money – maybe the best of the summer.

There were many more dazzling gems than Henderson on show at the Euro Under-21s, among them the Denmark and Ajax pair of Christian Eriksen and left-back Nicolai Boilesen.

> Henderson, who joined Liverpool for a barely credible £20m, was chasing Thiago's shadow

The star of the England team was 19-year-old central defender Phil Jones, who had also just completed a transfer – for £16.5million from Blackburn Rovers to Manchester United.

That was a British record for a teenager and a mighty sum, yet Jones looked a player of vast potential: robust and commanding in defence, blessed with elegant turns on the ball and an intelligent range of passing, and also willing to cruise forward in the manner of an old-time libero.

If he were Spanish, Italian or German, he would not cost anywhere near £16.5m. Yet, even amid the disturbing inflation scarring English football, Jones looks a perceptive piece of business by Alex Ferguson. WS

"I might be 33, but if anyone thinks I've lost my hunger for the game they are badly mistaken"

Underused by Bayern Munich over the last two seasons, Germany striker Miroslav Klose has signed a three-year deal with Lazio

GERMANY

Low calls time on unhappy Ballack's international career

Someone as proud and feisty as veteran Germany midfielder Michael Ballack was never going to take it lying down when he was told that he had reached the end of the international road. And, true to form, he erupted with fury when national coach Joachim Low recently announced that Ballack's career in a German shirt was about to come to an end.

Arguing that the time had come to focus on the next generation, Low added that he hoped to see the Bayer Leverkusen midfielder play one last time for the national team in a friendly with Brazil in August, a fixture that would have been Ballack's 99th cap for his country.

But, clearly hurt by the turn of events, Ballack was having none of it. "To call a friendly which was arranged long ago, a farewell match is, to my mind, a farce," roared the 34-year-old in a press release. "I know I owe my fans this game, but I cannot accept the offer. I'm surprised and disappointed. The style and content of Low's statement unfortunately reflect his treatment of me from the moment I was badly injured just before the World Cup in South Africa. To pretend that they always deal with me and my role as captain openly and honestly is the height of hypocrisy."

At first glance, Ballack's sense of betrayal is hard to fathom. The writing has been on the wall for the former Germany skipper ever since he picked up a serious ankle injury on the eve of the last World Cup finals. He has not made a single international appearance since, and with the likes of Bastian Schweinsteiger and Sami Khedira performing so well in central midfield, there seemed to be little prospect of a recall any time soon.

Suddenly engulfed by a media firestorm, Low and his employers at the German federation (DfB) insisted Ballack knew exactly the way the wind was blowing. Low says that, during phone calls and face-to-face encounters with his captain, he had the feeling that Ballack perfectly understood the need for the changing of the guard, while German federation general secretary Wolfgang Niersbach confirmed that the *Bundestrainer* had expressly informed Ballack that his time was up in a meeting held in March of this year.

Happier times...Low (left) and Ballack in South Africa during the 2010 World Cup

Ballack, though, has a totally different take on such conversations. He claims Low was very supportive, praised him for his fighting spirit and encouraged him not to give up on the national team. He says: "I wasn't told 'That's your lot' or 'You're not in my plans'. Quite the opposite in fact."

Ultimately, none of the protagonists in the row have emerged with much credit. Ballack has cut the figure of petulant diva and may well have done lasting damage to his footballing legacy, while Low has looked hesitant and ill-at-ease in his dealings with strong personalities - underlined by his falling out with Ballack's ex-midfield partner Torsten Frings last year. As for the DfB, the affair can only be described as a public relations disaster.

When dealing with the most influential player of his generation, one who scored 42 international goals and helped the team to a string of achievements (runners-up at the 2002 World Cup and Euro 2008, and third place at the 2006 World Cup), the federation ought to have taken every possible step to give him the honourable send-off he so richly deserved. Ballack should have been persuaded to gracefully walk away, making the announcement himself. Maximum respect, minimal furore. If only life was that simple.

Nick Bidwell

REPORTS we couldn't make up

1 Bangladesh sacked national coach Gjore Jovanovski just nine days after his appointment.

The Macedonian was named coach in June and his first assignment was due to have been a two-leg World Cup Asian zone preliminary round tie against Pakistan, scheduled for June 29 in Dhaka with the away leg in Lahore on July 3.

But Jovanovski delayed his arrival and told the Bangladesh federation that he would arrive after the tie had been completed.

"We have no choice but to cancel his appointment as he is unwilling to travel to Pakistan," said federation executive Badal Roy.

2 Former UAE international Fayez Juma was sentenced to death following the fatal stabbing of another man during a brawl in 2008. Mohammed Najib, who played with Juma for club side Sharjah was also sentenced to death, along with Juma's brother, Moses.

3 St Petersburg have made an official protest to the Russian federation after Serbian striker Danko Lazovic was attacked by a riot police officer with an electric shock baton after Zenit's league game away to Volga Nizhny Novgorod.

Following a 2-0 victory, a jubilant Lazovic approached the visiting fans and went to throw his shirt to them. He was then allegedly attacked by a policeman with a stun gun.

"I had a strange feeling," said Lazovic, who claimed the shock left a burn under his right shoulder. "I don't know why it happened. Probably, he took me for one of the fans."

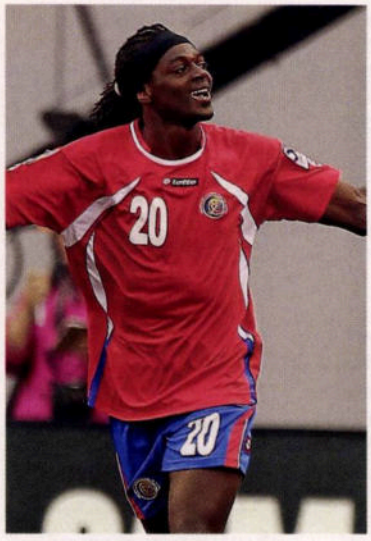
"I must smell or something!"

Goalkeeper Joe Hart on why England understudies Ben Foster and Paul Robinson quit international football

■ OBITUARIES

VLADIMIR PETTAY (1973-2011)

The referee was killed in a plane crash in the northern city of Petrozavodsk as he was returning from officiating in the Russian Premier League match between Dynamo Moscow and Rubin Kazan.



DENNIS MARSHALL (1985-2011)

The Costa Rica defender, who scored against Honduras in June's Gold Cup in the United States, was killed in a car crash on his return from the tournament.

JOHN KERR (1943-2011)

The former New York Cosmos and Canada international was a pioneering figure in the NASL. He was born in Scotland and began his career with Partick Thistle before emigrating to Canada and going on to hold a number of coaching positions in the USA. In the 1990s, he was executive director of the MLS Players Association.

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

We need a rethink on penalty encroachment

Just a year ago we had, during the World Cup finals, a splendid example of the chaos that can result when the rule book fails to address, with precision, a key issue.

In the 57th minute of the Spain-Paraguay quarter-final, with the score at 0-0, referee Carlos Batres awarded a penalty to Paraguay. The call was a good one, but what followed was not so good. The goalkeeper Iker Casillas saved Oscar Cardozo's kick, and the save was allowed to stand - despite massive encroachment by at least two Spain players.

Two minutes later, Batres awarded another penalty, again correctly, this time for Spain. Xabi Alonso slammed his kick into the net, but Batres ruled it must be retaken because of encroachment. It involved both teams, and was less flagrant, but there clearly was encroachment.

As the Paraguay keeper Justo Villar saved Alonso's second kick, and the score remained 0-0, you could say justice was done. But a big question loomed: how come Batres had missed the blatant encroachment on the first kick, but had spotted something less obvious on the second?

Indeed, was it Batres who made that second call? Studying the replays closely, Batres appears to have his gaze firmly fixed on the penalty taker, making it highly unlikely that he could spot the encroachment at the right-hand limit of his field of vision.

One explanation that has been offered to me, by an experienced referee, is that Batres was informed, via his radio, that he had screwed up on the first kick and therefore was looking to make amends. Possible, I suppose, though I'm not sure exactly who would be giving him that information, or whether, under FIFA regulations, that's acceptable procedure.

At the root of the problem, though, is the rule book and its lack of clarity.

Significantly, the rules have nothing to say about this situation. Everything I refer to below comes from the "Interpretation" section, not the rules themselves...

Where should the referee and the assistant referee (AR) be positioned at a penalty kick? The AR's position is sharply defined - "at the intersection of the goal line and the penalty area". For the referee's position there is no wording, merely a rather distorted diagram, showing the referee standing in the penalty area, in line with the penalty spot, and about 10 to 12 yards to the left of the spot.

And so to the biggest difficulty: what are those two officials supposed to be looking for? The AR, again, has his duty clearly spelled out. "If the goalkeeper blatantly moves off the goal line before the ball is kicked, and a goal is not scored, the AR must raise his flag."

But once again, there is no such advice for the ref. Evidently it is his responsibility to watch for two other infringements at a penalty kick: illegal feinting by the taker and encroachment.

> Where should the referee and the assistant referee be positioned at a penalty? What are those two officials supposed to be looking for?

But the advised positioning makes that impossible. Television replays make it clear that, in the World Cup game, Batres, on both penalties, is watching the kicker.

These are absolutely crucial situations, but the vagueness of the rules leads to poor decisions. In the example I've given, encroachment caused the problem. It could equally have been goalkeeper movement, something the AR's should have flagged for, but did not.

The rules need a rethink. It has to be the responsibility of someone to watch for encroachment. Either the fourth official has to get involved, or the referee's position has to be moved back so that both the taker and possible encroachers are within his field of vision. The same difficulty - simultaneously observing two widely spaced actions - also applies to the AR's role of checking on both the taker and the goalkeeper. **WS**

"Roma are like a dessert that everyone is happy to eat"

New *Giallorossi* coach Luis Enrique

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

IN

EUROPE

Lyon replaced coach Claude Puel with **REMI GARDE**. Also in Ligue 1, Bordeaux appointed **FRANCIS GILLOT**, who was succeeded at Sochaux by **MECHA BAZDAREVIC**. **LAURENT FOURNIER** of third-tier Strasbourg took over at Auxerre from **JEAN FERNANDEZ**, who is now at Nancy, and **DANIEL SANCHEZ** left second division Tours for Valenciennes.

VINCENZO MONTELLA, who took interim charge of Roma for the final four months of last season, signed a contract to coach Catania in a raft of Serie A appointments. Former Barcelona B boss **LUIS ENRIQUE** has taken over full-time at Roma, **MARCO GIAMPAOLO** replaced **MASSIMO FICCADENTI** at Cesena, newly promoted Siena named **GIUSEPPE SANNINO** as their replacement for Juventus-bound **ANTONIO CONTE**, **STEFANO PIOLI** swapped Chievo for Palermo, former Sampdoria boss **DOMENICO DI CARLO** took Pioli's place at Chievo and **ALBERTO MALESANI** left Bologna for Genoa.

RUUD VAN NISTELROOY has returned to La Liga on a free transfer after 18 months in the Bundesliga with Hamburg, signing for a year with Malaga.

Back in Spain... Van Nistelrooy

GREGORIO MANZANO returned to lead Atletico Madrid, eight years after he last held the post. Sevilla replaced **MANZANO** with **MARCELINO**, who kept Racing Santander in La Liga last season. **PHILIPPE MONTANIER** left Ligue 1 side Valenciennes to join Real Sociedad. **LUIS GARCIA**, who resigned after three seasons as coach of Levante, has replaced Michel at Getafe. Levante appointed **JUAN MARTINEZ**, who was previously in charge of second division Cartagena.

ALEX McLEISH, who won the League Cup last season, resigned as manager of relegated Birmingham City and took charge of arch-rivals Aston Villa. Former Tottenham Hotspur manager **MARTIN JOL** also returned to the Premier League, as boss of Fulham.

VICTOR PITURCA took charge of Romania's national side for a third time.

Former Greece Under-21s and Panathinaikos coach **NIKOS NIOPLIAS** has replaced Angelos Anastasiadis in charge of the Cyprus national team.

Israeli coach **RONI LEVY**, who led Unirea Urziceni to second place in the league in 2009-10 season, has left Beitar Jerusalem in his homeland and returned to Romania to take charge of Steaua Bucharest. **RAZVAN LUCESCU** is the new coach of Rapid Bucharest, while **JORGE COSTA** has replaced Alin Minteuan at CFR Cluj.

Greek Europe League qualifiers Olympiakos Volou and PAOK appointed coaches in **JAVIER GRACIA** and **LASZLO BOLONI** respectively.

Former England manager **STEVE McCLAREN**, who won the Dutch league with Twente before being sacked by German club Wolfsburg in February, has taken charge of English second-tier side Nottingham Forest.

In Switzerland, **BERNARD CHALLANDES** joined Thun after leaving Neuchatel Xamax, who then appointed former Brazil striker **SONNY ANDERSON** as coach.

EDGAR DAVIDS and **JOHAN CRUYFF** have been elected to the Ajax board.

SOUTH AMERICA

Cruzeiro appointed former South Africa coach **JOEL SANTANA** after Cuca resigned following a dismal start to the Brazilian championship. **ABEL BRAGA** took charge of Fluminense when his contract ended with UAE club Al Jazira.

A month after leaving Italian club Catania, **DIEGO SIMEONE** was named as coach of Argentina's Racing Club.

Racing man... Simeone

AFRICA

VAHID HALILHODZIC has been named as the new coach of the Algeria national team. The 55-year-old was in charge of the Ivory Coast until 2010.

ASIA

Experienced French coach **PAUL LE GUEN**, who led Cameroon at last year's World Cup, is the new boss of the Oman national team.

MICHEL PREUD'HOMME left Dutch Cup winners Twente after just one season to take over as coach of Saudi Arabian club Al Shabab.

Former Cameroon coach **WINFRIED SCHAEFER** replaced Bryan Robson as boss of Thailand.

Inter go for Gasperini

Gian Piero Gasperini will become Internazionale's fourth coach in a year, following the departure of Jose Mourinho to Real Madrid, Rafael Benitez's sacking in December and Leonardo's imminent move to Paris Saint-Germain as sporting director

The 53-year-old Gasperini, who led Genoa to promotion in 2007 and qualification for the Europa League in 2009, was sacked by ***I Rossoblu*** in November.

Inter president Massimo Moratti said: "I wish Gasperini all the success that have taken Inter to become Club World champions."

New man... Gasperini

"He was brought in to work at a football club, not to hang out in discos and nightclubs"

Controversial Terek Grozny proprietor Ramzan Kadyrov (right) fired coach Ruud Gullit for allegedly taking his eye off the ball

Transfers, sackings and loans

OUT

EUROPE

After three years without a trophy, Lyon parted company with coach **CLAUDE PUEL**. The 49-year-old won the French league title in his first coaching post with Monaco in 2000.

MIRSAD JONUZ was dismissed as coach of Macedonia, with the side in fifth place in their Euro qualifying group following successive defeats to Republic of Ireland.

DELIO ROSSI left Palermo for the second time in four months, three days after they lost 3-1 to Internazionale in the Italian Cup Final. Genoa terminated coach **DAVIDE BALLARDINI's** contract a year early after less than a season in the job.

Denmark's joint-top scorer **JON DAHL TOMASSON** has retired at the age of 34 after failing to regain full fitness following an injury he suffered while playing in last year's World Cup in South Africa.

Finished...Tomasson

RAZVAN LUCESCU resigned as coach of Romania less than 24 hours after his side's Euro 2012 qualifying 3-0 win over Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Having missed the final five Premier League games of last season due to ill health, coach **GERARD HOULLIER** agreed to part company with Aston Villa. **MARK HUGHES** resigned as manager of Fulham.

Lokomotiv Moscow fired coach **YURI KRASNOZHAN** the day before his 48th birthday, despite being fifth in the Russian Premier League, following a 2-1 home defeat by Anzhi Makhachkala.

Coach **MARTIN LASARTE** parted company with Real Sociedad despite leading them back to La Liga and then keeping them up on the final day of the 2010-11 season.

SOUTH AMERICA

MIGUEL RUSSO stepped down as coach of Racing Club at the end of the Argentinian clausura campaign.

AFRICA

Egypt coach **HASSAN SHEHATA** resigned after a 0-0 draw with South Africa virtually confirmed his side's elimination from the African Nations Cup.

Algeria coach **ABDELHAK BENCHIKHA** resigned after the 4-0 defeat by Morocco in the African Nations Cup qualifiers. He had been in charge for just three competitive matches.

DR Congo's Motema Pembe sacked coach **NASREDDINE NABI** four days before their African Confederation Cup play-off game against Simba of Tanzania.

Out on a high...Krol

Dutchman **RUUD KROL** did not have his contract renewed by Orlando Pirates despite coaching the South African side to the league title.

ASIA

Former Manchester United and England captain **BRYAN ROBSON** left his post as coach of Thailand's national team by mutual consent.

Ex-Liverpool striker **ROBBIE FOWLER** quit Australian A-League side Perth Glory and returned to England to complete his coaching badges.

RICARDO GOMES, who led Vasco da Gama to victory in this year's Brazilian Cup was fired from his new job in charge of Saudi Arabia's national side after just one week for failing to agree on a starting date.

League champions Al Hilal sacked Argentinian coach **GABRIEL CALDERON** after they lost 3-1 to Saudi rivals Al Ittihad in the AFC Champions League and then went down 3-0 to the same side in the first leg of their King's Cup semi-final clash.

Home... Fowler

Gullit sacked by struggling Terek Grozny

Ruud Gullit was sacked as coach of Russian Premier League side Terek Grozny after a 1-0 defeat at fellow strugglers Amkar Perm.

The defeat left Gullit's side 14th in the 16-team table, with just three wins from 13 matches.

Looking for a new club...Gullit

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

Blatter can run but he cannot hide from ISL

The FIFA fiasco continues, but when will it ever stop? That indefatigable investigator Andrew Jennings, author of the devastating book *Foul!* recently informed us on television that the time is coming – and, in all honestly, a very long time it has been – when the diligent and incorruptible Swiss lawyer Thomas Hildbrand will emerge from his investigations in the canton of Zug where he has been bravely burrowing away for eight long years. He will blow the whistle on the depredations concerning the scandalous, now defunct, ISL, involving Joao Havelange and his former son-in-law Ricardo Teixeira, to make proceedings possible – though we may have to wait until the end of the year until they are fully developed.

The implication is that Sepp Blatter, too, will be implicated; in which case (or cases) perhaps there is a real chance that FIFA, in its present infamous incarnation, will be blown apart so that football can start with something new.

Henry Kissinger, who has somewhat bewilderingly been enrolled by Blatter to assist with FIFA'S supposed regeneration, was once, no matter what happened in Cambodia, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize – which moved that glorious musical parodist Tom Lehrer to announce that he was giving up satire. And so long as Blatter remains in command, no matter his promises, satire is surely redundant.

Havelange, after all, having manipulated Stanley Rous out of the FIFA presidency in 1974, reigned for the next deplorable 24 years virtually unopposed. So, given the fact that Blatter this year shouldn't have been standing at all, what did it matter that nobody opposed him? Would it have been any kind of improvement had Mohamed Bin Hammam, so badly caught out in his attempts to suborn CONCACAF voters, been able to stand against him?

> Perhaps there is a real chance that FIFA, in its present infamous incarnation, will be blown apart

A question of power...Blatter (right) chats to Havelange at an International Olympic Committee function last year

Blame Havelange as you wish, but his voracious hegemony was made easy and possible by the shameful passivity of the football world at large, not least that of the FA, who never emitted a squeak of protest until Adam Crozier, never my favourite figure in any of his contentious roles, at least had the guts to stand up and assail Blatter before the 2002 presidential election in Seoul. Not that it made an atom of difference.

Subsequently, as we know, Graham "The Jelly" Kelly, the man who was FA midwife to the "Greed Is Good League" and then chairman of the FA, deserted Lennart Johansson at the 1998 presidential elections in France, switching their vote to Blatter in the deranged belief that he would be their ally. Well, he wasn't.

Betrayal is everywhere

The trouble is that almost wherever you look, betrayal is in the air. What hope is there for FIFA and for football when such titans of the game as Michel Platini and Franz Beckenbauer espouse the cause of FIFA and of Blatter?

Both were eminently capable of delivering the perfect pass, but now, alas, they seem equally capable of selling it. Platini shamelessly, though I am sure incorruptibly, voted for Qatar as the World Cup hosts for 2022. Which reminded me of the verse by Humbert Wolfe, decades ago, which ran: "There is no way to bribe or twist, thank God, the British journalist. But seeing what the man will do, unbribed, there's no occasion to".

Et tu, Franz! When the smoke but not the stench had more or less cleared on Blatter's one man re-election, Beckenbauer, as he wrote, "was also

Move...McLeish is the new Aston Villa manager

glad the FIFA Congress passed off without any escalation of tension. In the end, reason prevailed after all the mud-slinging leading up to the event".

Yes, indeed, a mud-splattered Blatter prevailed. "I am," continued Beckenbauer, "pleased that Sepp Blatter has the backing to stand for a fourth term."

Franz and Michel: golden boots but feet of clay.

GIVE BERNSTEIN SOME CREDIT

The FA, as we know all too dismally well, haven't had a decent top executive since Rous relinquished what was then, less grandiosely, the secretaryship to become president of FIFA. But at least the present, somewhat uninspiring, chief mogul David Bernstein found the courage and initiative for the symbolic gesture of refusing to cast a vote in the fatuous presidential election.

Recently, Platini's Italian sidekick at UEFA, Gianni Infantino, has demanded that FIFA put its house in order. Eh? With a UEFA president who endorses the candidature of wretched little Qatar – only a fraction of whose meagre population is native born – and thinks the World Cup should be switched to the European winter to accommodate them, what hope can there be?

Hugh Robertson, the latest political anonymity to become minister of sport, demands that the FA shouldn't bid for a future World Cup. Which, in any case, would take us into 2026. Meanwhile, the rank memories of the last English bid, under the confused tutelage of ineffectual, misguided Andy Anson – how could he possibly blame Panorama when both ensuing tournaments were already shamefully done and dusted? – persist. Apparently it was a former Manchester United spin doctor – as if Alex Ferguson ever needed such a creature – who was ultimately responsible for that horribly embarrassing grovelling, not only by prime minister David Cameron but even by the manipulated Prince William, to the repugnant likes of Jack Warner – to whom the FA had long grovelled already and who, predictably, broke his worthless word.

> For all his experience and sophistication, Houllier was all too plainly a health risk after his heart attack while at Liverpool

On behalf of all voices crying in the wilderness, including my own, let us hope that Zug and Hildbrand bring us some kind of long belated catharsis. We should live so long.

And the reptilian Warner slides away with "a presumption of innocence". Innocence!

VILLA IN AN AWFUL MESS

What an abysmal mess Aston Villa have made of their managerial appointment.

In the first instance, it was a risky move ever to appoint Gerard Houllier. For all his experience and sophistication, he was all too plainly a health risk after his heart attack while at Liverpool. Had he been called to some normal activity, all might have been well, but the pressures on a football manager, especially at that elevation, will always be unforgiving.

What next? Mark Hughes, who had just walked out on Fulham at the end of his one-year contract, seemed a logical bet, but, allegedly, Randy Lerner, Villa's American owner, didn't like the way Hughes had behaved and excluded him. The choice then fell on "The Wally With A Brolly", Steve McClaren, figure of fun at a rain-soaked Wembley, winner of the Dutch league with Twente, but a failure, alas, at Wolfsburg in the Bundesliga. But Villa fans rose up in arms. They didn't want him at any price, so the club backed down.

Thus it was that they came – just a few miles away – to Alex McLeish, manager of a Birmingham City team which had deservedly won the League Cup Final against Arsenal but were later relegated. McLeish still had over two years on his contract with City but this, surprisingly, didn't bother Lerner and Villa, whatever the rejection of Hughes.

McLeish, who I have always found a likeable and impressive manager, then claimed, with seemingly the support of the League Managers Association, constructive dismissal. Eh?

The Villa fans rebelled again, as angry as were the Birmingham fans with this defection, but now Lerner stood firm and McLeish had the job – with legal consequences to come. Villa insisted, against all the evidence, that McLeish had, by resigning, made himself a free agent. Oh, well.

Almost concurrently, Arsenal's chief executive Ivan Gazidis, who cut his teeth in USA football, gave an odd address which at one point even elicited "murmurings of laughter" from a supporters' audience. Manager Arsene Wenger, he said, "is ultimately accountable to the fans; they are the ones who ultimately make the judgement".

The pompous group of fans who perversely opposed Wenger's appointment in 1996 would doubtless have agreed, but he subsequently made them look as idiotic as they were self-important. Fans, continued Gazidis, "have the ability...to make it unsustainable for him to stay". At Arsenal? I deeply doubt it, though at Real Madrid in Italy and in Buenos Aires, where the hooligan mob extort tickets and privileges from the major clubs, it might well be true. And at Villa? Well, we shall see... **WS**

Next in line...Villas-Boas (left) joins Abramovic (right) in the Chelsea directors' box in 2005

HAVE SOME PITY FOR VILLAS-BOAS

Andre Villas-Boas at Chelsea? What has the poor fellow done, whatever his achievements at Porto, to deserve that?

Even if he has done great things at Porto, he won't even have the substantial backing of Guus Hiddink behind him.

When Chelsea and the billionaire oligarch Roman Abramovich enlisted Carlo Ancelotti and Jose Mourinho they were both managers of maturity, each of whom had won the European Cup – as opposed to that drawn out and synthetic affair the Europa League – Fulham against the Faroes? Oh, please! – which Porto carried off with some style.

At Stamford Bridge, Villas-Boas will have to hope and pray that through some minor miracle, or perhaps a summer's rest, the struggling Fernando Torres finds his form.

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"WE DON'T KNOW HOW MANY MORE FIXED GAMES THERE HAVE BEEN"

As Europe's most notorious match fixer was jailed for a second time in Germany and FIFA teamed up with Interpol to tackle illegal gambling in Asia, new football betting scandals were emerging across the world. John Holmesdale reports

Heading for jail...Match-fixing mastermind Ante Sapina before the court in Bochum is in session

The 2011 Champions League Final showcased everything that is good about the modern game. As images of Lionel Messi and his victorious Barcelona team-mates were beamed around the world from Wembley Stadium, few people had the time or the inclination to reflect on a far darker side of the game that had been highlighted in a German courtroom.

A few days earlier, in Bochum, north-western Germany, Ante Sapina was being sent back to prison. Football's most notorious match fixer had been sentenced to five-and-a-half years after Europe's biggest match-fixing trial.

The Croatian is no stranger to the dark world of rigging football games. In 2005 he was jailed for three years, along with his brother Milan, for masterminding the scandal that engulfed Robert Hoyzer, the disgraced referee who was banned for life in Germany.

On his release from prison, Sapina, 33, vowed to go straight, but Cafe King, his Berlin coffee bar where he met with Hoyzer, would once again be the epicentre of a criminal network with links to illegal gambling rings in Asia.

The Bochum police who initiated the latest inquiry stumbled across Sapina's new criminal network almost by accident while installing phone taps during a routine case of extortion in Dortmund.

But whereas the Hoyzer scandal centred on lower leagues in Germany, Sapina's new network was far more ambitious. The Bochum court heard evidence of 47 suspicious matches, but police suspect that more than 300 across Europe may have been fixed by Sapina's gang.

Sapina was jailed after confessing to a role in fixing around 20 matches between 2008 and 2009. He targeted leagues outside Germany where players were modestly paid and where large bets from Asia would go unnoticed.

Sapina's co-defendant Marijo Cvrtak, another Croatian, was also sentenced to five-and-a-half years. A third man, Dragan Mihelic of Slovenia, was given a suspended sentence.

Judge Wolfgang Mittrup said Sapina and his co-defendants had "shamefully destroyed the enthusiasm of many fans".

Sapina revealed in court that they used a rating system to analyse matches, with five stars ensuring that the result was almost certain thanks to payments to players and officials.

Crucially, they did not try to fix the final result of matches. Instead, they concentrated on the "in-play" betting market, where internet bets can be placed in real time on events such as the number of goals scored in injury time.

World Cup qualifier

Sapina and Cvrtak admitted to manipulating more than 20 games, including the 2010 World Cup qualifier between Liechtenstein and Finland in September 2009.

Sapina testified that he had met Bosnian referee Novo Panic in a Sarajevo car park. He agreed to pay Panic €40,000 to fix the result of the otherwise meaningless World Cup qualifier by ensuring that two goals would be scored in the second half. The match ended in a 1-1 draw with both goals indeed coming in the second half – one the result of a clearly questionable penalty decision.

Flight of fancy...Finland's Niklas Moisander gets a lift from Liechtenstein's Marco Ritzberger in a World Cup qualifier that attracted the investigation's attention

Sapina vowed to go straight but his Berlin coffee bar would again be the epicentre of a criminal network

Other manipulated games included a Champions League qualifier between Debrecen of Hungary and Fiorentina - in which the Italians took a four-goal lead by half-time only for the Hungarians to score three times after the break – and several Europa League matches, as well as league games in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Turkey, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia and Canada.

"We know about 300 matches in 20 countries where we have the suspicion that they may have been manipulated," said Friedhelm Althans, head of the Bochum inquiry. "The matches concerned involve mainly lower-ranking leagues, but it goes all the way up to national teams, Champions League and Europa League matches.

"The money involved for players, referees and officials amounts to €1.7m, but we don't know how much has been paid beyond our knowledge."

The Sapina case came to a close as FIFA was concluding an agreement with Interpol aimed at tackling the Asia-based illegal gambling market. Over a 10-year period, Interpol will receive

Insult to injury...referee Chaibu halts play in the Nigeria-Argentina game that also aroused suspicion

about £17million from FIFA to fund an anti-corruption unit at its Singapore headquarters.

FIFA also announced the creation of an internal Betting Integrity Investigation Task Force, which will comprise members of its legal and security departments, as well as experts from Early Warning System GmbH, a Zurich company that monitors betting patterns.

"Match fixing shakes the very foundations of sport," said FIFA president Sepp Blatter. "We are committed to doing everything in our power to tackle this threat. We have to try to put an end to these activities

"Fans will no longer go to football matches if they know they are fixed. And if that happens, everything that has been created in FIFA will count for nothing."

Notable successes

Interpol secretary general Ronald Noble said that his organisation has already had some notable successes. At last year's World Cup, a joint operation involving police forces across China, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand resulted in the arrest of more than 5,000 people. Nearly 800 illegal gambling dens, handling around £100m worth of bets, were raided.

FIFA is currently investigating two international friendlies played in Turkey in which seven penalties were awarded, one of them taken twice. The six match officials involved have been suspended pending the outcome.

Argentina's recent 4-1 friendly defeat by Nigeria in Abuja is also being investigated after suspicious betting patterns were reported. Although Argentina fielded a B team, it is by far the highest profile game to come under the microscope.

Referee Ibrahim Chaibou, from Niger, awarded a controversial penalty deep into stoppage time from which Mauro Boselli scored for Argentina with the last kick of the match.

FIFA is also coming under pressure to investigate results involving Zimbabwe's national team after they recorded heavy losses during a tour of Asia in 2009.

A key witness in the Zimbabwe investigation is likely to be Raj Perumal, a Singaporean national who organised the matches on behalf of the Zimbabwe FA. Perumal was also responsible for the fake Togo team that played a friendly against Bahrain last year.

Perumal was also a central figure in the recent scandal in Finland. As the reports on the following pages indicate, Sapina may be behind bars but match fixing remains a growing threat to the integrity of the global game.

FINLAND Singapore sting

The major match-fixing scandal currently engulfing Finnish football is an example of the global nature of betting-related corruption.

Finnish football offers the ideal conditions for match fixing. The domestic league is low profile but still organised along professional lines. Players, often poorly-paid foreign imports, can be open to temptation.

The Finnish league operates from spring to autumn, allowing Asian gambling markets to carry on betting while the major European leagues are on their summer break.

The current scandal centres on Raj Perumal, a Singaporean suspected of fixing international games between African and Asian sides, and the man behind the controversial Togo side that was exposed as fake after playing against Bahrain last year.

Perumal is facing trial in northern Finland alongside nine members of Rovanieman Palloseura (RoPS) – seven Zambians and two Georgians – who have been charged with accepting bribes of more than £500,000 to fix matches.

Finnish prosecutors allege that Perumal was at the heart of the operation. He admitted to investigators that the Asian company which employed him as a fixer made between £300,000 and £900,000 per game.

The scandal has since spread to include three-times Finnish champions Tampere United, who were suspended from the league before the start of the season after club officials admitted receiving payments from a Singaporean company linked to Perumal.

A criminal investigation has since been launched. "We suspect that top officials of Tampere are involved, including board members," said Ari Karvonen,

Suspect...Perumal

the police officer leading the investigation. "There is enough material to find them guilty."

Two players from another Finnish club, Oulu, have already been convicted of match fixing.

Zambian brothers Donewell and Dominic Yobe were found guilty of accepting £45,000 to influence a game between Oulu and TPS Turku last year and ordered to repay a bribe.

GREECE League chief named

Vangelis Marinakis, Greece's top league official and chairman of champions Olympiakos, has been named as a suspect in a major bribery scandal that has shaken Greek sport.

Super League president Marinakis, a shipping tycoon, was among 68 people named by the authorities in a list that also included national team and Olympiakos defender Avraam Papadopoulos, agents, businessmen and club officials.

Deputy culture minister Giorgos Nikitiadis has described the scandal, dubbed *Calciopoulos*, as "the darkest page in the history of Greek football".

So far, 10 arrests have been made following an investigation launched after UEFA gave the Greek authorities a report citing irregular betting patterns surrounding 41 matches, mostly in the domestic Cup and second

Top man... Marinakis

division, in 2009 and 2010. It is believed as much as €13million was made from betting on one particular match.

Those arrested included Stavros Psomiadis and Achilleas Beos, chairmen of top-flight clubs Kalava and Volos respectively. Volos finished fifth last season in the 16-team league, while Kalava was seventh. Judicial officials said no evidence had emerged so far implicating players of either team in the alleged match fixing – only the club officials.

Details of the alleged scandal were given in a 130-page document seen by the news agency *Associated Press*.

It says the document contains numerous transcripts of recorded telephone conversations - many filled with profanities and threats of physical violence - allegedly between corrupt team officials deciding match results, using players and referees.

Bets on the allegedly fixed games were placed on line or with betting agencies in Greece, Europe and Asian countries, according to the document.

"We have pledged to tackle the problems in football," said culture minister Pavlos Geroulanos "There is a direct link between what is happening in football and broader Greek society. This is where the money went – it went into the pockets of corrupt people."

I'm innocent...Signori pleads his case at a media conference in Bologna

ITALY *Calciopoli* revisited?

So then, another match-fixing scandal in Italy? Can it really be true? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. Five years after the infamous *Calciopoli* scandal involving Serie A giants Juventus, Italian football finds itself in sadly familiar territory, and this time the affair may well prove to be both bigger and more intractable than its infamous predecessor.

At the beginning of June, 16 people, including former Lazio and Italy striker Giuseppe Signori, were arrested and charged with being members of a gang that systematically fixed Italian football matches. Some of those arrested, including former Bari captain Antonio Bellavista, went straight to prison, while others such as Signori were put under house arrest.

If *Calciopoli* was essentially about a Machiavellian exercise of power and influence over referees in Serie A, the latest scandal would appear to be exclusively betting-related and concerns mainly second and third division games, many played during the season just ended. It is also about the dark shadow of organised crime and the outside manipulation of football by betting gangs, allegedly with links in Asia.

Like many investigations, this one started almost by chance, prompted by some strange happenings immediately after a third division game between Cremonese and Paganese in November. Five Cremonese players and a physio complained of feeling unwell after the game and were taken to hospital for tests. Traces of the tranquilliser lormetazepam were found in their urine, prompting suspicions that their half-time and pitchside drinks had been doctored. One of the players was so groggy that he had a serious car accident on his way home from the match.

In the end, the attempted doping failed as Cremonese won 2-0. The club, however, alerted the police, who initiated a widespread investigation which, based on information gained from thousands of mobile phone taps, saw arrests in places as diverse as Ancona, Ascoli, Bari, Benevento, Bologna, Como, Ferrara, Naples, Pescara, Ravenna, Rimini, Roma and Turin.

Initially, the investigation was focused on 18 games, five of them being Serie B matches and just one (Internazionale v Lecce, on March 20) in Serie A. Since then, on an almost daily basis, other games have been added to the list.

It needs to be said that in the midst of the inevitable media hype prompted by the latest *Calcioscommesse* scandal, it was difficult to sort out the genuine wheat from the chaff. Important names, such as Roma players Daniele De Rossi and Francesco Totti, along with ex-Italy striker Christian Vieri and current Atalanta captain Cristiano Doni, were bandied about with alarming alacrity, merely because their names had come up in various phone taps.

While they would seem to be totally extraneous to the scandal, the same may not be true, however, of Signori. Three times leading Serie A goalscorer in the 1990s and 28 times capped by Italy, the 43-year-old Signori is well known in the football community as an obsessive gambler. He is alleged to have waged £130,000 on the Inter-Lecce game in expectation of a "guaranteed" 3-0 win for Inter. (The game actually ended 1-0).

> "Organised crime is taking over a huge chunk of the betting market. It is becoming a new Mafia frontier"
>
> **Piero Grasso, Italy's senior ant-Mafia investigator**

At an emotional press conference in Bologna in late June, Signori broke down and in tears swore he had done nothing wrong, admitting that he had been approached about various match fixes, but had always refused to have any part. Unfortunately for Signori, however, the judge who days earlier had ordered he

be released from house arrest, had also written "the proof that has been gathered, thanks to testimony from other defendants, fully confirms the charges that have been made against Signori".

It is alleged that Signori, known as "The Chinaman" because of his Singapore gambling connections – they would place the bets for him – was the chief player in a Bologna-based gang which thought little of gambling up to £350,000 on a "guaranteed" fixed result. Inevitably, the games in question were fixed thanks to the collaboration of a couple of key players in a given team. Investigators even claim to have found evidence of a corruption price list: €300,000 for a Serie A game, €120,000 for Serie B and €40-60,000 for the lower divisions.

Betting shops

Other alleged protagonists in the betting gang include Bellavista, ex-Ascoli player Vincenzo Sommese, Marco Pirani, an Ancona-based dentist, Massimo Erodiani, who runs betting shops in both Ancona and Pescara, and the former Cremonese goalkeeper Marco Paoloni, who is accused of having attempted to drug his team-mates during the Cremonese-Paganese game.

The scandal has hardly taken Italian football by surprise. For example, for much of this winter, *Gazzetta Dello Sport* has run a series of investigations about the infiltration of organised crime into Italian football. Headlines such as "Betting Alarm – The Authorities Must Help", "Gomorrah In Football – Too Many Wagers On Chievo v Sampdoria, Brescia v Bologna" and "Match Fix Alarm – Cesena, Sampdoria, Lecce and Brescia Under Observation" have alerted readers to the phenomenon.

In a country where lower-level clubs are regularly in financial difficulty and often fail to pay their players, the temptation to round off or indeed replace one's non-existent salary with a bit of gambling may have proved too much for some players. Once they get into the habit they are easy targets for organised crime in search of insider collaborators.

Italy's senior anti-Mafia investigator Piero Grasso recently told the weekly *L'Espresso*: "Make no mistake, Mafiosi have made the most of the chance to get into a business [betting] in which they can both make a lot of money and at the same time calmly invest and recycle huge sums.

"Investigations carried out by many different anti-Mafia units confirm that organised crime is taking over a huge chunk of the betting market, a market whose profits, including legal profits, is on the increase. This whole area is becoming the new Mafia frontier."

Game of chance...Inter v Lecce, on which Signori is alleged to have placed a £130,000 bet

Big result...Alessandro Lucarelli scores in Parma's win at Napoli on which the Camorra is said to have bet heavily

> "Balotelli does not understand that one day they will come looking for a favour"
> **Grasso on Man City striker's "day out" with Camorra**

Grasso also highlights another well-known phenomenon, the control/ownership of lower level, mainly southern clubs, by organised crime. He says although the various Mafia clans have not been able to penetrate Serie A clubs they have their hands on many lower level ones, commenting: "Above all, it is the need for local consensus which attracts them to football, because it gives them power, which in turn becomes useful at election time."

Grasso also warned footballers about the company they keep, in the process confirming media reports Manchester City's Italian striker Mario Balotelli had spent a day with a Camorra family in Naples. "Carabinieri in Naples tell us that the Lo Russo clan and the Scissionisti were seen in the town, showing Mario Balotelli around," Grasso said. "What Balotelli does not understand is that perhaps, one day, they will come to him looking for a favour. In places like Palermo and Naples, players need to be careful about the company they keep."

Grasso also pointed to the recent experience of the Serie D Calabrian club Cittanova. "It turns out that one member of the Pesce clan from Rosarno was signed by Cittanova," he said. "At that point, who would have the nerve to tell him to sit on the bench for a game? On the contrary, this guy ended as both captain and owner of the team. A few months ago, however, the club was closed down because of [infiltration by the Calabrian Mafia]."

Confirmation of Grasso's worst fears appeared to come from a series of photos showing Antonio Lo Russo, son of Camorra boss Salvatore Lo Russo, standing on the sidelines at the Stadio San Paolo during one of the suspect games, Napoli v Parma in April last year, which ended with a "surprise" 3-2 away win for Parma. A carabinieri report at the time, reproduced by *Il Messaggero*, read: "Many people linked to the Lo Russo and Scissionisti clans placed heavy bets on a Parma win."

Where was the Italian Football Federation when all this was happening? To be fair, the federation points out that it simply does not have sufficient resources – either legal or personnel – to carry out the sort of policing that would be necessary to combat this phenomenon.

In the meantime, the federation is in a similar situation to five years ago when it rushed its *Calciopoli* investigation through the summer in order to be able to draw up the fixture lists (complete with freshly relegated sides such as Juventus) in time for the new season. It will be the same this summer, if only because both promoted Atalanta and Siena may be indirectly involved in the scandal.

Despite that, federation president Giancarlo Abete has promised its own enquiry will be done and any disciplinary sanctions imposed by the end of July/beginning of August. Chief investigator Stefano Palazzi has his work cut out. Rest assured, this one will run and run...

Paddy Agnew

Strong arm of the law... former Cremonese keeper Paolini is arrested

SOUTH KOREA Player suicide taints K-League's squeaky clean image

On the surface, it seemed as if the K-League had a squeaky clean image – at least as far as Asian sports go. If it had one glaring failing it was the inability to attract the kind of attendances South Korean football officials believe their set-up deserves.

But all that unravelled in the closing days of May as a match-fixing scandal thrust the Korean game into the dark waters of corruption and scandal.

As the rigging allegations initially fingered a string of K-League and lower-league players, the reputation of the game in Asian football's leading football nation plunged even greater depths when one suspect, Jung Jong-kwan, a 30-year-old midfielder with third-tier Seoul United, was found dead after apparently hanging himself.

By mid-June, 10 suspects had been banned for life by the K-League, who did not wait for the outcome of a criminal investigation that saw a string of players and brokers indicted.

But despite the veneer presented by the K-League, one local newspaper told of previous speculation that match rigging was prevalent in South Korea's only professional division.

Some of the players identified in ongoing investigations were alleged to have been engaged in illegal on-line lottery betting involving their own matches, according to the *Korea Herald*. Eight of those banned came from the same team, Daejeon Citizen.

The scandal even drew in national coach Cho Kwang-rae, with the former boss of K-League Gyeongnam moving to dispel rumours that two members of his senior squad – midfielders Kim Jung-woo of Sangju Sangmu and Yoon Bit-garam of Gyeongnam – were involved in rigging games.

Kim Tong-hyung, a former football writer with a South Korean national newspaper and now a business journalist, says: "These types of scams are said to be quite common in Korean pro sports. Years ago a star basketball player was suspended for exactly the same crime and, incredibly, was allowed to return for the play-offs. Leagues haven't been treating this problem seriously. I think the investigation will unearth a disturbing depth of ineptitude and complacency."

Other clubs named as having players caught up in the allegations include Sangju Sangmu, made up of military conscripts, and K-League new boys Gwangju, formed only last year in time to take part in the 2011 season.

The most high-profile player among the suspects was Kim Dong-hyun, a former national team forward. The 27-year-old, who has won six caps and at one time turned out for Braga in the Portuguese league, is currently carrying out his mandatory two-year military service with Sangmu. He is suspected of raking in a fortune as part of the alleged match-fixing ring and his case is being handled by the military.

Shown the door

Yet reports have emerged claiming some clubs have been quietly releasing players since last year as they became aware of rumblings over match fixing. On June 2 it was announced Pohang Steelers had shown the door to midfielder Kim Jung-kyum for allegedly betting on the result of a Steelers match two months previously. Capped seven times by South Korea, Kim turned out for the Steelers nine times this season – the last time five days before his sacking. He incurred a five-game ban for allegedly hearing of the scam involving the eight Daejeon players and placing his own bet based on information gleaned.

Much of the driving force behind the alleged rigging is said to be the rising number of on-line gambling sites run by gangs operating in both South Korea and China, with many of the players snared in investigations on the fringes of their teams and relatively low earners.

The rigging scandal is the last thing the K-League needs as it battles plummeting attendance figures. At present, baseball outstrips football as South Korea's number one spectator sport. League officials have previously cast envious eyes over the Sea of Japan at the J.League, which has seen average crowds rise considerably in recent years.

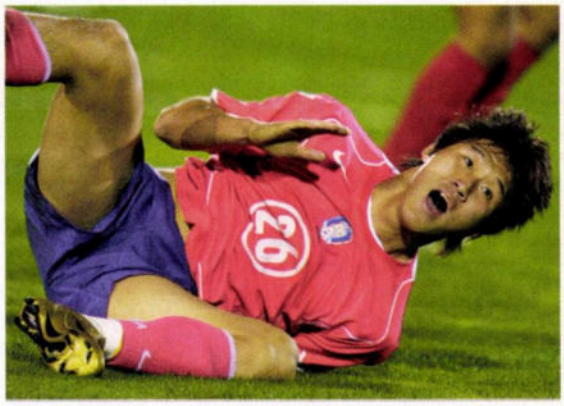
Chung Mong-gyu, who took over the K-League presidency earlier this year, has made it his aim to tackle the stranglehold baseball has over South Korean sports fans both in the stands and on TV.

Under suspicion...Kim Jung-kyum (below) has been sacked by Pohang Steelers while former South Korea striker Kim Dong-hyun (bottom) is suspected of raking in a fortune from match fixing

"The core problem for the K-League had been its failure to take advantage of the public's passion for football built up during Korea's World Cup runs in recent years," says Kim Tong-hyung. "Fans have long been deriding the quality of play. Now this scandal adds insult to injury for a league that is desperate to be taken seriously. In that case this could be the league's darkest moment in its 29-year existence."

In the days after the scandal broke, the K-League and the Korea Football Association went into public relations fire-fighting mode. That resulted in a full-scale investigation, followed by a pledge from a body of 1,100 people – made up of players, coaches, officials and referees – not to engage in agreements with betting brokers or any other illicit activity that could influence the outcome of a game.

Yoon Kang-ro, president of the International Sport Diplomacy Institute and a former senior member of the Korean Olympic Committee (KOC), says the slew of new punishments that followed delivered a strong warning.



> "We expect strong action to be taken. There has been enough pre-warning"
> **Yoon Kang-ro, ex-Korean Olympic Committee member**

But he believes the revelations should act as a catalyst for a clean-up of South Korean sport in general. "Maybe the KOC will have a similar reaction [to that of the government and soccer authorities]," says Yoon. "We expect strong action to be taken. We are bidding for the Winter Olympics for the third time so this should not happen any longer. There has been enough pre-warning."

But given the trickle of suspect names and information about their dodgy deeds emerging daily in the days after the scandal broke, it seems these dark times in the annals of South Korean football may descend to even murkier depths.

Bryan Kay

Dispatches

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

P30

ARGENTINA
After 110 years in the top flight, River Plate are relegated for the first time in their history.

P32

SOUTH AFRICA
One year on from the 2010 World Cup and the domestic game has never been better.

P33

USA
Mexico once again prove too good for the USA in the Final of the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

P34

BRAZIL
Santos' Libertadores Cup victory over Penarol is marred by ugly scenes at the final whistle.

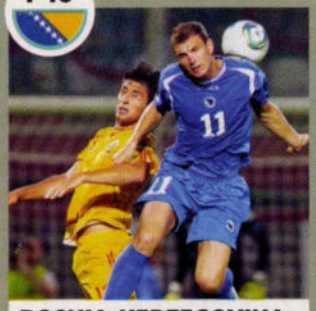
P36

SWITZERLAND
Swiss minnows Neuchatel Xamax are the latest European club to be bought by foreign investors.

P37

SPAIN
Granada return to La Liga after 35 years – with more than a little help from Italian club Udinese.

P40



BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA
Political problems still remain despite the lifting of a ban on international competition.

P42

FRANCE
Monaco discover that they are not too good to go down, while Lille do the domestic double.

P38 **TRINIDAD & TOBAGO** Controversial T&T administrator Jack Warner resigns to avoid further FIFA investigation.

P41 **AZERBAIJAN** Sepp Blatter is on hand to celebrate 100 years of football in the former member of the Soviet Union.

JOEL RICHARDS
in Buenos Aires

Velez triumph as River go down

Riots as 33-time champions exit the top flight for the first time

Velez Sarsfield may have taken the plaudits with their eighth league title, but the big story of this season was the relegation of River Plate for the first time in their 110-year history.

Beaten 3-1 on aggregate by Belgrano in the relegation play-off – *la promocion* – the demise of the 33-time champions was greeted by violent scenes. Seats ripped from the stands soon flew onto the pitch. Police then clashed with rioting fans in a battle that left many injured and the stadium, the Monumental, a disaster zone.

At River, the *barra brava* – organised hooligan group – are in the middle of a civil war over who dominates the lucrative business of ticket touting. River going down to "La B" is not good for business, and they let the authorities know.

Although *Los Millonarios* finished the 2010-11 season in a respectable sixth place, it was poor form in their previous campaigns that condemned them. The three-year averages that decide relegation had saved River in 2009, when they came bottom of the table in Diego Simeone's last season, but the negative tactics employed by coach Juan Jose Lopez cost them dearly.

Even with 10 minutes remaining in the second leg of the play-off, and still needing two goals, there was a glimmer of hope for River. But when Mariano Pavone drilled his penalty into Belgrano goalkeeper Juan Carlos Olave's stomach, all hope of avoiding relegation vanished.

One reason for River's downfall was their inability to score goals. In the clausura they managed just 15 in 19 games and, relying on inspiration from Erik Lamela, they often set up with two holding midfielders in front of a defensive back three and two wing-backs.

In the search for scapegoats the previous president Jose Maria Aguilar and the incumbent Daniel Passarella shouldered the blame, and Lopez was quickly replaced at the end of the season by Matias Almeyda.

If River need a blueprint for how to put their house in order they need look no further than this year's champions.

A lack of continuity is a common criticism of Argentinian club sides, but the one team that are the exception to the rule are Velez, with the core of their title-winning squad being the same that triumphed in the league two years ago.

"Velez is at the peak of its own history, and at the top of Argentinian football"

River shock...a once-proud club are relegated to the second tier of Argentinian football

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
DIEGO VALERI (Lanus)
Returning to Argentina after a spell in Spain with Almeria, the midfielder was his side's creative spark and delivered with eight goals, all of which placed him in contention for a Copa America squad number.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
ERIK LAMELA (River)
Despite his team's terrible season, the 19-year-old has developed into one of South America's most sought-after talents with pace and ability in abundance.

COACH OF THE SEASON
RICARDO GARECA (Velez)
Mild mannered and respected by his players and peers alike, he cuts a serene figure in a hectic Argentinian football landscape.

Calm... Gareca

says Christian Bassedas, who is one of the few sporting directors working in Argentina, where the role is known by the English term "manager".

"Having someone in this role reduces the margin to make mistakes," he adds. "You can't compare it with the manager in English football, I'm not so involved in negotiations and I have to be careful how much I offer my opinion because the coach has the final say. I'm more of a consultant."

> If River need a blueprint for how to put their house in order they need look no further than this year's champions

Just as Bassedas plays down his role in the club's recent success, so too does coach Ricardo Gareca, who after the title win said he wouldn't be giving one-to-one interviews explaining "the real protagonists should do the talking". But Gareca moulded a side that played attacking football in both the Libertadores Cup and the domestic league.

"In spells we played well this season," agrees Gareca. "Perhaps we didn't sustain that level throughout, but at times we were excellent."

Continental honours had been Velez's main priority this season, as they tried to add to their Libertadores victory of 1994 but, after an impressive run, they lost on away goals to Penarol in the semi-finals, with their Uruguayan centre-forward Santiago Silva slipping and missing a penalty that would have assured his side of a place in the Final.

Velez did dispel the locally held myth that Argentinian clubs cannot compete in two competitions at the same time. Sticking with the trusted backbone of the side, Gareca rotated his squad accordingly. The driving force of the team was the impressive attacking trio of Silva, Maxi Moralez and Juan Manuel Martinez, and they were backed-up by pre-season signing David Ramirez from Godoy Cruz who, though not always first choice, ended the season as the side's top scorer.

Behind them, the eye-catching performances of Ricardo Alvarez – who is a summer target for English side Arsenal – from slightly deeper enforced the commitment to slick passing and quick movement. Defensive solidity was provided by central midfielder Victor Zapata, full-back Emiliano Papa, centre-back Sebastian Dominguez and goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero.

And while many bemoan the quality of football on show in the domestic game, second and third place for Lanus and Godoy Cruz respectively vindicated their attacking philosophies. **WS**

MARK GLEESON
in Cape Town

Rainbow Nation's World Cup legacy

One year on and South Africa's domestic game is thriving

The World Cup provided a lifetime's worth of excitement for the football enthusiast in South Africa, but within 12 months even that had been usurped by an unbelievably dramatic finish to the domestic championship.

Orlando Pirates won the Premier Soccer League on the final day of the season, snatching the title six minutes from time by beating Golden Arrows 2-1 in Soweto while closest challengers Ajax Cape Town blew their hopes of a first title by drawing at home to lowly Maritzburg. Transformed by Dutch coach Foppe De Haan, and needing only to win to finish clear of the pack, Ajax made two second-half errors and were held 2-2.

Pirates finished top on goal difference after Zambia midfielder Isaac Chansa hammered home a speculative long-range effort in the closing stages of their game against Arrows.

It had been a unique four-team title race until Kaizer Chiefs and Mamelodi Sundowns faded at the business end of the campaign, and one that has been described as the best-ever season for the professional game in South Africa, which is now more than 50 years old and has gone up a significant number of notches since the World Cup.

The legacy of the infrastructure from the 2010 tournament has been the biggest boost, with new and renovated stadiums boasting silky smooth pitches that bring a new credence to domestic games. It all made for some excellent football and never has a single season produced so many games with as much flair and excitement for the purists to purr over.

Ajax Cape Town, in particular, played a brand of football that would have been impossible a decade ago, when such attempts died quickly on the atrocious pitches commonplace at the time.

A year on from the World Cup and there has been the odd venue where standards have slipped, but the vast majority of playing surfaces remain superb. That's the case not only for the 10 World Cup stadiums, but also at many of the smaller grounds which were used as World Cup training venues and now house club sides.

In Polokwane and Nelspruit – two World Cup venues where there are no existing Premier League sides – the local municipalities paid clubs to play at their cavernous stadiums, and it proved a great success for the venues, the teams and the local economy as several games attracted near-capacity crowds.

The country's best-supported team, Kaizer Chiefs, ditched the Rand Stadium in Johannesburg as their home venue at the turn of the year and moved to Soccer City – where the 84,490 crowd at the World Cup Final has now been bettered three times since, with the new Soccer City attendance record standing at 91,727 for December's League Cup Final, in which Chiefs beat Pirates 3-0.

The average attendance for league games, however, remains under 10,000 and was not helped by the doubling of ticket prices at the start of the season.

As the people best placed to afford the huge ticket prices charged by FIFA, the World Cup saw a large local middle-class turnout. But while the traditional black, blue-collar support for the game continues to thrive, not many of those "new" fans have been back to watch a match since last summer's tournament – except in Cape Town, where there has been a noticeable change in the demographic of fans, particularly when games are played at the World Cup stadium in Green Point.

> Ajax Cape Town played a brand of football that would have been impossible a decade ago

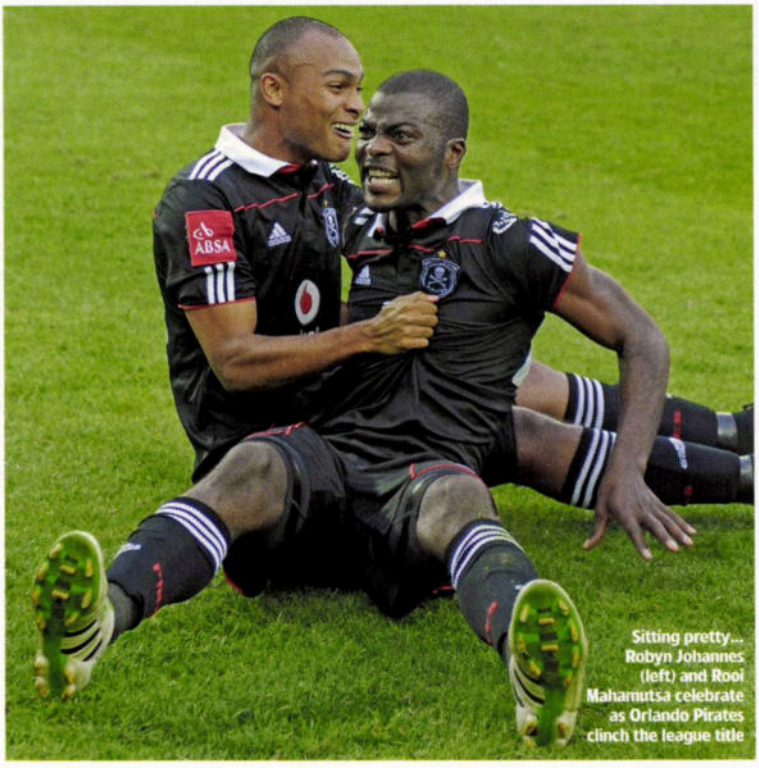
In hindsight, the Premier Soccer League (PSL) did little to persuade newcomers to try out the domestic product after the World Cup and if they had hoped it would just be a natural process, any potential momentum – and with it revenue stream – is now lost.

While the issue of attendances overall remains a negative, there were many positives and a real sense that there has been huge profit from the World Cup.

The general excitement around matches in the PSL has increased considerably. The drudgery and purgatory of average games has diminished considerably, and the mass media attention is now much more intelligent and well informed.

The fitness and athleticism of players is markedly better than it was even five years ago and it is a world away from the pedestrian pace of the game in the 1970s and 1980s. With increased television and commercial income, clubs have been able to afford a better standard of coach – such as Ruud Krol, whose Dutch influence at Orlando Pirates ensured they had an enterprising and competitive team.

If it keeps on its current course, the PSL can expect steady growth. It just needs to ensure that the infrastructure stays in good shape and its own ambitions are not clouded by political infighting, administrator egos or any other of the many distractions so beloved of South African society. WS



Sitting pretty... Robyn Johannes (left) and Rooi Mahamutsa celebrate as Orlando Pirates clinch the league title

PAUL GARDNER
in New York

In control...Mexico's Guardado (no18) clears a header from Carlos Bocanegra

Gold Cup goes to plan

Usual suspects reach the Final, but Mexico are too good for USA

Lurking behind the ugly acronym CONCACAF is a confederation that, while hardly one of FIFA's strongest, nonetheless harbours an intriguing mix of footballing styles and strengths. And while the biennial Gold Cup puts them all on display, most people would admit that 12 finalists is a little too many.

Cuba, Guadeloupe and Grenada were quickly eliminated this year, each having lost all three of their group games, and Canada also went home early after being let down by poor goalkeeping in a 2-0 loss to the USA, then brutally eliminated by letting in a stoppage-time equaliser from Panama's Blas Perez.

Panama had already sprung the upset of the tournament when, inspired by their captain Felipe Baloy, they beat the USA 2-1 – the first time, in 27 games, that the US had lost in the Gold Cup group phase. The US then struggled to an unconvincing 1-0 win over Guadeloupe to qualify for a quarter-final showdown with a Jamaica team who had proved the revelation of the first stage with three straight victories over Grenada, Guatemala and Honduras.

Coach Theodore Whitmore attributed Jamaica's success to their new ability to add ball-possession to their traditional explosive speed, but against the US they were too cautiously and they lost 2-0.

Meanwhile, Mexico were looking as irresistible as the USA were shaky. Two 5-0 wins, over Cuba and El Salvador, and a 4-1 pasting of Costa Rica saw *El Tri* sail easily into the second round, with five of their 14 goals scored by Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez.

Equally impressive was Mexico's drawing power. Over 80,000 fans turned up in Arlington, Texas for the game against El Salvador, 62,000 in Chicago for the 4-1 victory over Costa Rica and 78,000 in New Jersey for the quarter-final win over Guatemala.

The hoped-for Final

After 15 days and 22 games, all was going according to plan, for the structure of the tournament was unashamedly arranged to do all it could to ensure a Mexico-USA Final. But while the tournament may have been heading for the hoped-for Final, things had not gone so smoothly off the field.

The games were played against a background of political turmoil after CONCACAF president Jack Warner was suspended by FIFA, then general secretary Chuck Blazer was fired by stand-in president Lisle Austin - only to be re-instated with FIFA's support.

The organisers had to cope with problem after problem as five Mexico players failed a drug test and were suspended, German magazine *Der Spiegel* alleged that three first-round games were being investigated for match fixing, and then came the almost inevitable occurrence when Cuban teams play in the USA - the defection of a player.

In the semi-finals, the US – meeting Panama for the second time – scraped out a grim 1-0 win, proving, said Clint Dempsey, that "we know how to grind out a win", while Mexico needed extra time to down Honduras 2-0, with Hernandez scoring again.

Unlike the semis, the Final proved to be a dramatic and entertaining game.

A crowd of over 92,000 filled the Rose Bowl in Los Angeles, but the raucous pro-Mexico crowd was quickly silenced as the USA, with goals from Michael Bradley and Landon Donovan, stormed into a 2-0 lead after only 23 minutes. But by half-time Mexico, playing all-out attack at bewildering speed, had brought their fans back to life as they equalised with goals from Pablo Barrera and Andres Guardado. The Mexican onslaught continued in the second half, with Barrera adding his second goal and Giovani Dos Santos scoring a sublime fourth, dribbling into the penalty area and evading four or five defenders before chipping home.

> After 15 days and 22 games, the structure of the tournament was unashamedly arranged to do all it could to ensure a Mexico-USA Final

Mexico will now go to the Confederations Cup in Brazil in 2013 and the immediate future looks bright for coach Jose Manuel de La Torre's young team, with his three strikers – Dos Santos, Hernandez and Barrera – having an average age of under 23.

For the USA, defeat was close to a humiliation as the scoreline could have been a lot worse. Most worrying is that there is no sign of a new generation of young talent. The poor Gold Cup showing will also increase the pressure on US Soccer Federation president Sunil Gulati to replace coach Bob Bradley. WS

GOLD CUP VICTORIES: THE BIG TWO

Mexico's Gold Cup haul is more than double that of the United States

BRAZIL

TIM VICKERY
in Rio de Janeiro

Santos win in scrappy finish

Brazilians overcome Penarol to win their third Libertadores Cup

The two legs of the Final of the 52nd Libertadores Cup produced three scrappy halves, 45 minutes of drama – and an almighty scrap at the end.

After the final whistle proclaimed Santos as champions, some of their supporters ran onto the field and mocked the Penarol players. Seldom the greatest of losers, Penarol needed little provocation and before long the rival squads were trading karate kicks on the Pacaembu Stadium pitch. It was an unsavoury closing memory from the competition, but not entirely out of kilter with Libertadores tradition.

There had been chaos when these teams met in the 1962 Final. Santos won the away leg but were losing at home in the return when their fans revolted, invading the pitch and attacking the officials. After a delay the Chilean referee continued with the game, but only as a safety measure. Officially he had already ended proceedings, so although Santos scored an equaliser, it did not count, and a third game on neutral ground was needed.

An element of continuity between 1962 and 2011 was provided by Pele, who 49 years ago returned from injury to tip the balance in that third game, and who was now on hand to award the trophy to his successors.

Few could begrudge his old team their third title. Penarol, in the Final for the first time in 24 years, were hardly the most convincing of teams in reaching this stage of the competition. Going into the meeting with Santos they had lost five of their 12 games, scoring 14 goals and conceding 17.

As one of the worst qualifiers from the group phase, Penarol were obliged to play the first leg at home in all of the knockout rounds. It is intended to be a disadvantage but, intelligently coached by Diego Aguirre, the Uruguayans turned it into the opposite with shrewd use of the away-goals rule. At home they kept things tight, while on their travels they broke with pace and purpose, and the formula kept getting them through.

The Final, however, presented them with a new problem as the away-goals rule did not apply. Instead, extra time is played if aggregate scores are level at the end of the second leg. Santos, then, would have had the chance of 120 minutes to win the game in Sao Paulo, so Penarol had to make the most of their 90 minutes in Montevideo.

They were backed by a superb atmosphere in the Estadio Centenario, but the pitch was not in good condition and the match was something of a disappointment, simmering without ever coming to the boil.

Striving for the breakthrough, Aguirre made attacking substitutions. One of those he brought on, centre-forward Diego Alonso, had the ball in the net late on, but it was correctly ruled out for a narrow offside. After that, set-piece half-chances were missed by defenders Guillermo and Dario Rodriguez.

For Santos, reserve left-back Alex Sandro attacked to good effect, though he might have been lucky not to have given away a penalty for a rash first-half tackle on Matias Corujo. Ze Eduardo forced the save of the game from Penarol keeper Sebastian Sosa, but little was seen of Neymar, who was perhaps intimidated by an early yellow card for diving.

Little impression

The emotional aspect was looking to be increasingly important when the second leg in Sao Paulo was goalless at the interval. Once again Penarol were making little impression, Alejandro Martinuccio well shackled by Adriano, target man Juan Manuel Olivera getting little change from the Santos centre-backs, and the promising, left-sided midfielder Matias Mier struggling to make an impact. The passing of Santos, though, was not sharp, and Paulo Henrique Ganso, back after seven weeks out with his latest injury, was only a flickering presence. Sosa's only moment of alarm came when he tipped over an Elano free-kick.

> An element of continuity was provided by Pele – winner himself 49 years ago – who was on hand to award the Libertadores Cup to his successors...and few could begrudge his old team their third title

The deadlock was finally broken less than two minutes after half-time. Midfielder Arouca bustled through the middle, played a neat exchange with Ganso and fed Neymar in his favourite position, cutting in from the left edge of the penalty area. Perhaps Sosa could have done better with the right-foot shot that bounced past him at the near post, but as so often Neymar's placement was admirably precise.

Twenty two minutes later Danilo showed similar aim, cutting in from the other edge of the area to guide his shot into the far corner. Santos seemed home and dry but, whatever its limitations, the 2011 Penarol side are full of spirit. With 11 minutes left they pulled one back, substitutes Jonathan Urretaviscaya and Fabian Estoyanoff combining down the right, and the latter's low cross turned into his own net by Santos centre-back Durval.

Penarol poured forward in search of an equaliser, but Santos on the counter were looking more likely to wrap it up with a third goal before the whistle went, and it was all over bar the shouting, the celebrating – and a little fighting. WS

LIBERTADORES CUP VICTORIES

Argentinian clubs have still won eight more Libertadores Cups than Brazilian clubs

Final disgrace...Neymar appears to stamp on a Penarol player at the end of the game

BRIAN HOMEWOOD
in Berne

Chechen money buys Swiss minnows

Foreign investor has ambitious for plans for tottering Neuchatel

Switzerland's second tier is called the Challenge League and mysterious Chechen oligarch Bulat Chagaev appeared to have confused it with the Champions League as he announced he was taking over Neuchatel Xamax.

After finalising the deal to buy previous owner Silvio Bernasconi's majority shareholding, Chagaev announced grandiose plans to take Neuchatel into Europe's top club competition, just as the second tier of Swiss football beckoned.

"I'm very happy to lead Neuchatel on to the path of national victory," he said. "With a motivated and well-prepared team, we will quickly accept the most incredible challenges in Europe, starting with the Champions League."

The declaration came with Neuchatel eighth in the 10-team table and only four points above the relegation play-off spot with five games to go.

The team's situation then got worse on the eve of the shareholders' meeting, which formally cemented the deal, when they lost 4-1 at home to Thun to put themselves in real danger.

Two hours before the meeting, Bernasconi saved Chagaev the bother of having to fire his first coach by doing it for him. Didier Olle-Nicolle was kicked out and Bernard Challandes, an old warhorse who has done the rounds of Switzerland's top sides, was brought in.

Chagaev failed to turn up for the shareholders' meeting and also conspicuous by his absence was Diego Maradona, rumoured to be part of the new set-up. Club officials actually seemed surprised Maradona did not turn up for a midday cocktail party which, if nothing else, displayed extraordinarily poor knowledge of his sleeping habits.

Maradona had played in an exhibition match in Grozny the night before and, even with a private jet at his disposal, was hardly likely to get up in time to be in Neuchatel less than 12 hours later.

Heavy duty... Chagaev (left) arrives at Neuchatel with new club president Rudakov

Instead, the Chagaev regime was represented by new club president Alexei Rudakov and Olga Danese, whose future role is still far from clear.

Rudakov quickly tried to damp down his boss' brash predictions, saying: "Today, it's about staying in the Super League and winning the Swiss Cup. Nothing is going to change, we have confidence in everyone." Other than that, almost nothing was said about his future plans.

> "I don't know what clean or dirty money is. Money has no family or country"
> **Bulat Chagaev**

It was, in almost every way, a stereotypical Russian-style takeover. Chagaev avoided the spotlight but found himself the focus of inevitable concerns about the origin of his wealth and the type of company he had been keeping – concerns which were more than justified, by the look of things.

He did deign to give an interview to Swiss television but said little about his income. When asked how much he is worth he replied: "I don't know as I never count my money." Was his investment simply a form of money-laundering? "I don't know what clean or dirty money is," he said. "Money has no family name or country; it's just money."

Chagaev is widely reported to be a close friend of Chechnya president Ramzan Kadyrov, whose government has been accused of a variety of human rights abuses, including torture.

Since December, Chagaev has been a sponsor of the Russian Premier League side Terek Grozny, bankrolling the hiring of coach Ruud Gullit – who has since been sacked following poor results.

Chagaev claims to have played for Grozny during the 1980s, although that seems impossible to verify. "I bought the club because I love football," says the man who reportedly comes from a family which had strong Communist party connections during the Soviet era.

The Swiss league has declined so far to worry about the sort of people they are dealing with. "The new owner will be subject to the same obligations as the predecessor and all the other club owners," said league director Edmond Isoz. "We will keep an eye open to make sure that everything is in order. We have plenty of powers which allow us to act relatively quickly if the need arises."

Neuchatel, who eventually avoided relegation by a solitary point, were formed in 1970 from the merger of two other clubs, Cantonal and Xamax. They were league champions in 1987 and 1988, and currently operate on a budget of about £8.75million a year, compared to big guns Basle and Zurich's £35m.

If Chagaev were to inject large amounts of cash into the club he could quickly fall foul of UEFA's Financial Fairplay rules – and even if Xamax did qualify for the Champions League, Neuchatel's small catchment area and limited potential income could still seriously damage his plans for European domination. WS

SID LOWE
in Madrid

With a little help from Italian friends

Granada make a controversial return to La Liga

If it was drama they were after, they got exactly what they wanted. If it was justice, that's a different matter. Instead, there is an argument that continues to rage. Not that those Granada fans diving in and out of fountains really cared. Real Betis and Rayo Vallecano both returned to the Spanish top flight after two and eight years away respectively. So, eventually, did Italian-owned Granada – 35 long years later. And they did so amid recriminations and accusations, controversy and flying rocks.

They also did so live on prime-time TV after Spain opted for a play-off system for promotion from the second division to the first. At last, Spain's footballing authorities had found a way to breathe real life into the summer. And the play-offs lived up to their billing, too.

Third-placed Barcelona B were barred from going up in order to prevent them facing their own first team, so Elche, Granada, Celta and Valladolid made the play-offs. At every turn there were brilliant games, tension and twists. Granada eventually went up with a 1-1 draw in the second leg of the Final in Elche, going through on away goals after a 0-0 draw in the home game.

> Granada have been a kind of Udinese B team playing, like Barca's reserves, in the Spanish second tier

But that doesn't even begin to tell the story of a clash that began with rocks being thrown at the team bus, continued with Elche having a goal wrongly disallowed, then had Nigerian striker Odion Jude Ighalo scoring a wonderful opener, and ended with rival fans confronting each other and a pitch invasion that saw Granada players being forced to run for cover.

For Granada coach Fabri next season will be only the second time he has coached in Spain's top flight, even though the 56-year-old has been in the game for as long as anyone can remember. He coached Logrones in the first division in 1994-95, but lasted just three games. Now he's back and Fabri will, the club have announced, be given his chance in La Liga as Granada will not do what many promoted clubs have done of late and make the assumption that they need a "first division manager".

The fact that most of his career has been in the lower leagues is not an impediment for him or his team. Fabri has had a long career, taking charge of 23 clubs and it was precisely that experience that saw Granada turn to him in the first place. He has now repaid them with two successive promotions.

"He has earned the right to continue," says club president Quique Pina, and the players could not be happier, either, talking about their coach as a father figure. But what makes Granada so fascinating is not the coach that they turned to but the team.

Granada called upon Pina to take over the club as president in 2009, when they were in the Second Division B. At the time Pina, a former player and agent, was working for Udinese in Italy. He agreed to take over, noting that the city and the fan base was sufficient to support a team. Better still, he agreed to do so with the backing of Udinese and its owner Gino Pozzo, who saw the value in the move and supported Pina. As the Granada president puts it: "They backed our project with an important economic investment and, above all, with players."

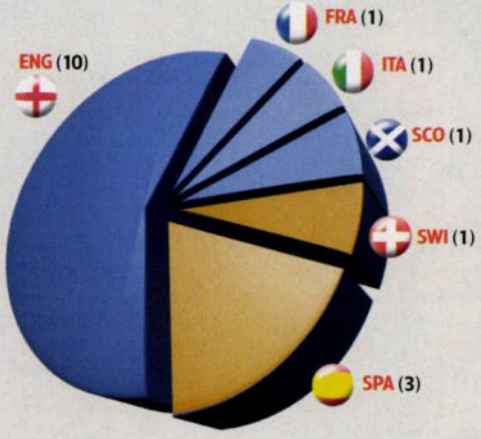
It is no exaggeration. Udinese have effectively bankrolled Granada, even though the Spanish club remains £6million in debt and they plan to go into administration as a way to clear their debts. And having taken a number of players from Spain in the past, the Italian club are now giving them back.

Ighalo, the man who scored the goal that took Granada up, is on loan from Udinese. So is Alex Geijo, Dani Benitez, Oscar Perez, and Carlos Calvo. Then there's Allan Nyom, Jonathan Mensah, Ruben, Luis Muriel, Fabian Orellana, Guilherme Siqueira and Diego Mainz. In total, 12 of Granada's first-team squad are actually Udinese players. The question is whether the formula will work next year: will Udinese's reserve players be sufficient to secure survival in the Primera Division?

For now, though, it has proven a good deal for both parties. For the Italians, Spain's second division has been a testing ground for their players and a way of making sure they get minutes while playing at a club they trust. Granada have been a kind of Udinese B playing, like Barca's reserves, in Spain's second tier. Unlike Barcelona B, though, they have been allowed to go up. And as the supporters celebrated, that was the only thing that mattered. WS

Play-off party...Granada players celebrate their promotion from the balcony of the ancient city's town hall

FOREIGN OWNED TOP-FLIGHT EUROPEAN CLUBS



ENGLAND
Arsenal
Aston Villa
*Birmingham City
Blackburn Rovers
Chelsea
Fulham
Liverpool
Manchester City
Manchester United
Sunderland

FRANCE
Paris Saint-Germain

ITALY
Roma

SCOTLAND
Hearts

SWITZERLAND
Neuchatel Xamax

SPAIN
Getafe
Malaga
Racing Santander

*(*Birmingham were relegated at the end of last season)*

LASANA LIBURD
in Port of Spain

Jack hits the road – but with a smile

The controversial Warner's fall is a relatively painless affair

Trinidad & Tobago football administrator Jack Warner met his FIFA end with a smile rather than a tsunami of rage. If this were a mafia killing, Warner – the former FIFA vice-president and CONCACAF and Caribbean Football Union (CFU) president – received a single, clean body shot from close range. He was not shot in the face, but received a mobster's honourable discharge.

"His contribution to international football and to Caribbean football in particular and the CONCACAF confederation are appreciated and acknowledged," said FIFA, in what could pass for a eulogy. "As a consequence of Mr Warner's self-determined resignation, all ethics committee procedures against him have been closed and the presumption of innocence is maintained."

There were some grumbles by Warner at the perceived "hypocrisy" that preceded his departure from "the FIFA family", but after shrieking that president Sepp Blatter "must be stopped" a few weeks ago, he had an impish grin on his face as he spoke to the Trinidad media.

"Sure we have had disagreements from time to time," said Warner. "But Blatter and I are friends."

Five days before Warner's resignation, Trinidad & Tobago's police commissioner, Dwayne Gibbs, wrote to FIFA "requesting information they have that may assist the Trinidad & Tobago Police Service (TTPS) into commencing any investigations into any alleged criminal activity within our jurisdiction". Canada-born Gibbs – who was appointed by the present government, which includes Warner as an MP – was slow off the mark and arguably goaded into action by the opposition.

Had Warner been found guilty by FIFA, whose case is being led by ex-FBI director Louis Freeh, the same information could feasibly have led to a jail sentence of up to 15 years for the disgraced football administrator under a law meant to punish white-collar crime.

But FIFA is unlikely to give any help to Trinidad & Tobago's police service now. Its decision to close the case and accept Warner's resignation felt more like justice denied than served. Even in defeat, Warner Had won.

His alleged co-conspirator, suspended Asian Football Confederation president and ill-fated FIFA presidential candidate Mohamed Bin Hammam, could negotiate a similar deal and leave FIFA's Zurich headquarters with a pension.

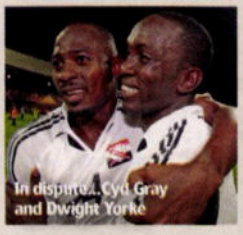
On May 10 and 11, Bin Hammam, accompanied by FIFA ExCo members Manilal Fernando (Sri Lanka) and Worawi Makudi (Thailand), flew to Trinidad in a private jet for a meeting with CFU delegates at Warner's invitation. The Qatari millionaire allegedly travelled with around $1 million in cash to buy votes for the June 1 election.

Home ground...Warner is surrounded by his supporters on arriving in Port of Spain

'PRESUMED INNOCENT': JACK WARNER'S FIFA CONTROVERSIES

1989

Accused of printing and selling an extra 13,000 tickets for a sold-out World Cup qualifying match


In dispute... Cyd Gray and Dwight Yorke

2006

Trinidad & Tobago qualify for the World Cup for the first time, but the players fall out with Warner over unpaid bonuses

2006

Found guilty of two breaches of FIFA ethics code for re-sale of World Cup tickets through his family's own travel company, Simpaul

At odds... Warner and Triesman

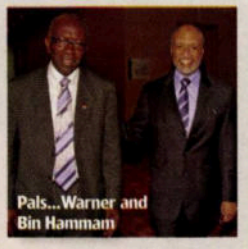
2007

Scottish FA chairman John McBeth claims Warner asks for the proceeds from a friendly against T&T to be paid into his own account

2011

Former English FA chairman Lord Triesman alleges that Warner requested £2million for an "education project" and suggested the FA purchase Haiti's World Cup "TV rights" – even though those rights were already owned by the Haitian FA

Suspended by FIFA after setting up a meeting of the Caribbean Football Union at which Mohamed Bin Hammam allegedly offered members $40,000 each


Pals... Warner and Bin Hammam

Warner's portfolio as Minister of Works and Transport gives him some degree of oversight at the Piarco International Airport and Surinam FA president Louis Giskus claimed he was assured by Warner's staff that local Customs officers would not bother him. CFU assistant general secretary Debbie Minguell and event coordinator Jason Sylvester, both Trinidadians, were also charged by FIFA for their alleged role in the scandal.

As CONCACAF descended into civil war, the media was treated to a stream of "leaked" excerpts from affidavits, incriminating text messages and even a photograph of the cash supposedly offered to the Caribbean officials.

CONCACAF's general secretary Chuck Blazer claimed to be stunned by Warner's misdeeds and was praised by Blatter for his "civic courage" in forwarding evidence to FIFA. History suggests, however, that the American is an unlikely fit for the role.

Arm in arm

Blazer and Warner came into power, arm in arm, more than two decades ago. And, while the pair planned their successful CONCACAF takeover, Warner was facing a commission of inquiry in Trinidad after turning the country's National Stadium into a potential death trap by cramming an extra 13,000 fans into the ground for a crucial World Cup qualifier against the USA in 1989.

At the time, Warner vehemently denied printing bogus tickets. Eight years later, he bragged about it in his first biography, *Upwards Through The Night*, and claimed that his crime was meant to erase a US$583,000 debt to the Trinidad & Tobago FA.

Far from disgusted, Blazer hailed Warner as "simply the best man" for the role of FIFA president in the Trinidadian's second biography in 2006, a year in which Warner was convicted of breaching FIFA's ethics code and reprimanded in two separate incidents that revolved around his involvement in the re-sale of World Cup tickets.

"Jack is a measure of reality for those who like bullshit," said Blazer in *From Zero to Hero*. "If he wants to, I believe that he can head the organisation one day."

Meanwhile, the Bahamian delegation was cast as "whistle-blowers". Bahamas FA vice-president Fred Lunn, supposedly offered US$40,000 in a brown envelope, signed for the cash and took it to his hotel room where he arranged the money in neat rows and took photographs. By his account, this was a spontaneous action.

BFA president Anton Sealy, the only visiting association president to snub the all-expenses paid trip to meet millionaire Bin Hammam, acted swiftly on Lunn's tip-off. Neither man demanded an answer from the CONCACAF and CFU president. Instead, they turned to Warner's employee and friend Blazer.

Within two weeks, Blazer's lawyer, John Collins, who also represents CONCACAF and sits on the FIFA legal committee, presented a file to FIFA general secretary Jerome Valcke and a stunned Warner was swiftly charged.

> Blazer was praised for his "civic courage". History suggests, however, the American is an unlikely fit

Three years ago, former Grenada FA president Ashley Folkes stood up to Warner at a CFU meeting on a point of principle. The St Kitts & Nevis federation president Peter Jenkins was the only Caribbean delegate who dared to sit next to Folkes thereafter.

Both were removed from their positions within months following CONCACAF interventions in their respective associations and Folkes, who knows Caribbean football politics well, is suspicious of this saga.

"Those who signed affidavits had to be extremely confident that this was the end of Jack," he said. "They would have had to be convinced by [persons higher up] that everything would be all right because, if this [didn't] work out, it would be the end of them. I don't see anyone being brave enough to do that."

Blazer wasted little time in taking over at CONCACAF. Senior vice-president Lisle Austin, a Barbadian and Warner supporter, was promoted to acting president in Warner's absence but, when he got to Zurich, Blazer had already put Honduras' Alfredo Hawitt in his chair.

Austin objected successfully and then dismissed the lawyer Collins as a CONCACAF employee for a "conflict of interest" arising from his dual roles for Blazer and the confederation. But his announcement of an immediate forensic audit into CONCACAF's accounts was evidently a step too far.

Blazer physically barred Austin and the proposed auditors from entering CONCACAF's offices in Miami and New York, and although the Barbadian won a court injunction in the Bahamas – where the confederation is registered – FIFA banned Austin from all football-related activities.

Twenty-five of CONCACAF's 35 member associations are from the CFU and Blazer claims to already have the support of at least nine Caribbean nations plus the 10 representatives from North and Central America. Warner's demise, plus the weight of evidence from the Port of Spain meeting might force other CFU associations to switch sides.

Construction of the revamped CONCACAF was well under way when Warner resigned, but Blazer's tinkering is likely to prove more superficial than substantial.

If morality is ruled out, then what prompted the actions of Blazer, Blatter, Lunn and Sealy? "Power" and "betrayal" are plausible but simplistic responses.

The truth is that, despite a month's worth of prying by the press and a seemingly endless stream of information, FIFA and CONCACAF remain as mysterious and shady as before. All that is really known is that the flamboyant Warner is no longer there.

Even at the death, though, FIFA continued to insist that Jack Warner was a "goodfella" and his fall was relatively painless. WS

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

SASA IBRULJ
in Sarajevo

Back from the brink

Problems remain despite lifting of international ban

Seemingly happy, but obviously tired and exhausted, Ivica Osim appeared before the hordes of photographers. Bosnian football had looked to be on its deathbed, but after weeks of lobbying and negotiation, the chairman of FIFA's and UEFA's Bosnia-Herzegovina Football Federation (NSBiH) "normalisation committee", was finally able to break some good news.

"We succeeded," said Osim. "The general assembly of the Bosnian football federation unanimously adopted the statute and ended the suspension. Our clubs and national team are able to play again."

He added prophetically, however: "This is not the end, this is only the beginning. The real effort for this country's football is yet to come."

Composed of two political entities, Bosnia-Herzegovina is one of the most complex states in the world. And its football is no exception.

After reunification in 2002 the NSBiH had a tripartite presidency, made up of representatives from each faction: Bosniaks, Serbs and Croats. For years UEFA and FIFA had demanded that a single president replace the three-member leadership, but the NSBiH consistently refused to comply.

In April, a dark cloud hung over Bosnia-Herzegovina. With the general assembly of the NSBiH continuing to refuse to accept FIFA and UEFA calls for a single presidency, the international football authorities took a radical step.

> "We cannot allow football to die, not least for the sake of our children"
> Ivica Osim

Bosnia was banned from international competition, while a normalisation committee was created to oversee the necessary changes. The committee installed former footballers from all three factions, including such legends as Dusan Bajevic, Sergej Barbarez and Faruk Hadzibegic. At the helm of the committee was the man who perhaps commands the most respect in Balkan football today: Osim, who led Zeljeznicar to the UEFA Cup semi-finals in 1985 and was the last man to coach the former Yugoslavia national team.

Although apparently ill after recently suffering a stroke, 70-year-old Osim quickly got to work. "I will do everything necessary to put an end to this," he stated. "We cannot allow football to die, not least for the sake of our children."

After months of talks with all parties, including Milorad Dodik, president of the Serbian entity Republika Srpska, who were the strongest opponents of a single presidency, new statutes were agreed and the international ban was lifted in time for the national team to play Euro 2012 qualifying matches against Romania and Albania.

The suspension may have been lifted, but the real problems lie ahead. The normalisation committee will oversee the election of a new president who will have to tackle the FA's problems head-on.

The former FA management left behind a chaotic situation. Former general secretary Munib Usanovic has been sentenced to five years in prison for abusing his position, while other members of the executive committee are in prison for physical abuse. The tripartite presidency also signed two different TV-rights contracts at the same time, which led to a court battle.

Bosnian referee Novo Panic was recently suspended from the FIFA list following allegations of match fixing, while eight matches played by Bosnian clubs in European competition, as well as Travnik's pre-season tour of Switzerland, featured in the recent trial of Ante Sapina.

The financial situation of the federation is particularly troubling. NSBiH currently owes almost £1.5 million, and FIFA and UEFA have made solvency the country's number one priority. If the Bosnians fail to find a solution, it could lead to bankruptcy.

In the meantime, the national team, coached by Safet Susic, is the one bright spot amid the gloom. After reaching the play-offs for the 2010 World Cup, the team now has a great opportunity to qualify for Euro 2012. The starting line-up – which includes Edin Dzeko, Emir Spahic and Miralem Pjanic – features players from all nationalities and has huge support among the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The potential success of the national team makes the next moves by the normalisation committee all the more important. Osim seemed a perfect choice for president, but he has rejected the idea.

Bosnia needs a charismatic individual with the courage to tackle all of the tough issues, but if no such candidate comes forward, getting through the recent crisis will have been in vain. WS

Leap forward...Dzeko (right) is challenged by Paul Papp of Romania in a Euro 2012 qualifier after Bosnia's re-admittance to the international stage

DAVID DAVIES
in Baku

Blatter out on centenary watch

Blatter escapes Zurich to join in Azerbaijan celebrations

The scene was a floating pleasure barge in the Caspian Sea off Baku. On board were a bunch of English journalists relaxing – as journalists still do occasionally – after the rigours of trailing in the wake of the re-elected FIFA president, Sepp Blatter, on his first foreign foray since the dramas of his "coronation".

As the umpteenth meat course arrived, and before the chicken and fish delicacies were served up, as the lunch table creaked under the burden of Azerbaijani hospitality and the massive tablecloths flapped in the stiff breeze that is commonplace in this part of the world, even the most battle-hardened hacks were in awe.

Because waxing lyrical in their midst – about the illustrious role of their own nation's Cambridge University in the early development of football – was the general secretary of the Azerbaijan FA, Elkhan Mammadov. Aged 32, and three years into his appointment, Mammadov is still the youngest top administrator of any national association in the world.

The previous day, along with his FA president, Rovnag Abdullayev, Mammadov had revelled in hosting the Blatter entourage that you sensed was delighted to be on the road again – and with Congress behind it – to celebrate 100 years of Azerbaijan football.

The country has a football history that includes clubs originally founded and funded by the oil companies of Baku. This golden era, in the 1960s, produced inspirational Soviet-era names such as Anatoliy Banishevskiy and Alakbar Mammadov, and, of course, a linesman called Tofik Bakhramov, whose "ball over the line" decision in the 1966 World Cup Final is hotly debated even now.

> They laid roses outside the ground named after surely the only linesman to be his nation's favourite son

Geoff Hurst, scorer of still the only World Cup Final hat-trick in history that day, and Hans Tilkowski, West Germany's goalkeeper, know their debt to Bakhramov and the fame he brought them. Both were there in downtown Baku to lay red roses at the feet of the towering statue outside the stadium named after surely the only linesman or referee in the world to be his nation's favourite football son.

Azerbaijan, of course, won't be going to the finals of Euro 2012 in Poland and Ukraine. Qualification for such finals has evaded them since they began entering international competitions in the 1990s as an independent nation again. As recently as November last year, though, they reached the dizzy heights of 90th in the FIFA rankings following a shock victory over Guus Hiddink's Turkey. Sadly no other points have come their way in a disappointing qualification campaign.

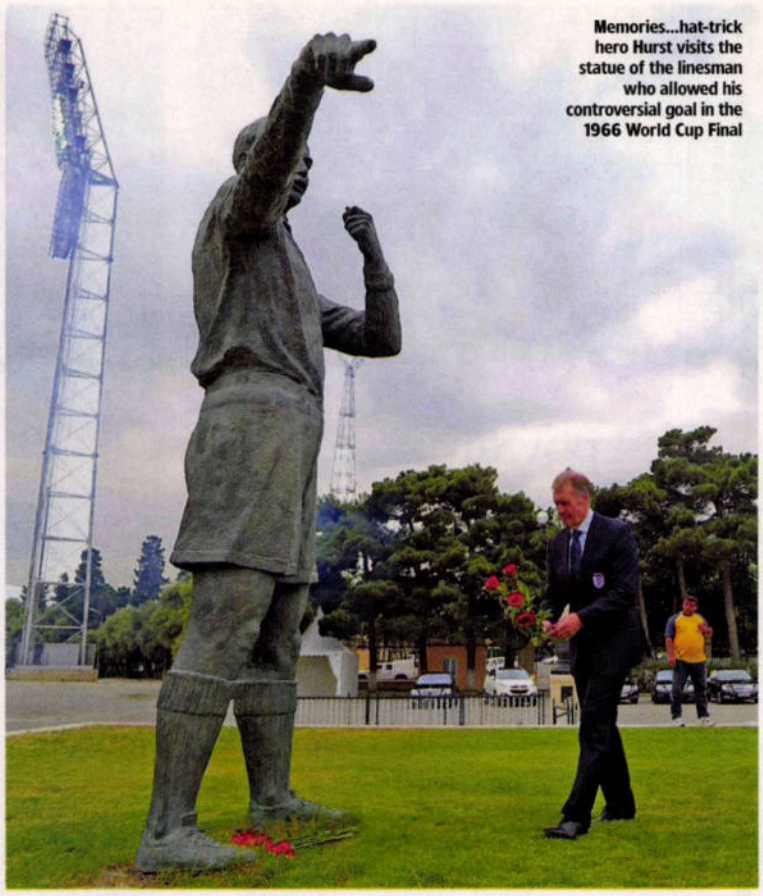
The reign of German coach Berti Vogts, who took charge in 2008, looks to be in its last days. June's defeat in Kazakhstan was followed by a bizarre news conference that climaxed with a toilet roll being thrown by an exasperated journalist at Vogts, who promptly refused further contact with the media as a result. Hours later came a much improved performance, back home in Baku, against the coach's home nation, which ultimately ended in a 3-1 defeat by Germany.

The country's football federation believes, nonetheless, that it is making progress. Azerbaijan's Premier League was won this year by the country's best known club, Baku-based Neftchi. More professional clubs, new youth leagues, success in UEFA's Futsal European Cup – and for the under-17 team in the President's Cup in Kazakhstan earlier this year – all are seen as evidence of the game heading in the right direction.

The staging of FIFA's Women's World Cup, also for under-17s, next year seems likely to provide another fillip.

Meanwhile, the beachside Dalga construction, dubbed "the jewel by the Caspian Sea" by Blatter, is only part of a startling development programme that includes a new national stadium. **WS**

● *David Davies is the former executive director of the FA*



Memories...hat-trick hero Hurst visits the statue of the linesman who allowed his controversial goal in the 1966 World Cup Final

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

Located at the crossroads of west Asia and east Europe, Azerbaijan is the largest country in the Caucasus region of Eurasia.

Population 9,000,000
Size 33,436 sq miles
Capital Baku
Language Azerbaijani
Religion Muslim

HOWARD JOHNSON
in Paris

The power is shifting in Ligue 1

Unfashionable Lille do the double as Monaco are relegated

With a team that cost, at £13million, less than half of David Villa, Lille's league triumph will no doubt have thrilled UEFA's French president, Michel Platini, who will see it as proof positive that success can be cultivated and nurtured rather than simply bought. Yet it would be hard not to be excited by Lille's first Ligue 1 title since 1954, regardless of UEFA's Financial Fairplay policies to curb excessive spending.

Playing consistently entertaining football, the unfashionable club from an unfashionable region made it a truly memorable season by beating Paris Saint-Germain in the French Cup Final to complete the double.

The challenge now facing coach Rudi Garcia is to work out how to take the club forward and make sure this wasn't a one-off success. The task, however, won't be a simple one for a club that has an average home gate of under 17,000.

Even though Garcia insists that the majority of his team aren't going anywhere, the fear is that the reality will prove somewhat different. Big money offers and unsettled players are usually a combination that proves fatal, and with France defender Adil Rami already off to Valencia in Spain, and midfielder Yohan Cabaye to England and Newcastle United, there's a serious risk of this special team now breaking up.

At the tender age of 20, midfielder Eden Hazard – who is on the radar of all Europe's giants – might stick around for another season, but it's unlikely that Ivory Coast striker Gervinho will do the same, while Senegalese forward Moussa Sow's 25 league goals will have alerted bigger clubs to his fearsome potential.

There will be at least one newcomer wearing Lille's colours next season, though, as ex-France midfielder Benoit Pedretti is arriving from Auxerre for £2.2million, having signed a three-year deal with *Les Dogues*.

> Garcia insists most of his Lille team are going nowhere, but the reality is likely to prove different

Runners-up Marseille finished eight points behind Lille and will play Champions League football next season knowing that they are simply not good enough to mount any kind of consistent European threat. However, their build-up to the new campaign will have been helped by coach Didier Deschamps ending all rumours that he is heading back to Italy by signing a new two-year contract with OM.

Lyon trailed in third and will face a Champions League qualifying round after

Mastermind...Garcia

COACH OF THE SEASON
RUDI GARCIA (Lille)
Who else could it be but the 47-year-old who masterminded the club's magnificent double?

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
EDEN HAZARD (Lille)
The 20-year-old midfielder has all the skills in his locker and the world at his feet.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
M'BAYE NIANG (Caen)
The 16-year-old Senegalese striker signed his first pro contract in February, scored three excellent goals in four first-team starts by the end of the campaign and has attracted the attention of Manchester City and Juventus.

It's all ending in tears...Monaco's Daniel Nicolae can't hide his grief after the 2-0 defeat by Lyon condemns his side to the drop

what was a disastrous season for the one-time aristocrats – given that nothing but trophies will do for president Jean-Michel Aulas, who saw his side win seven consecutive championships up until 2008. Disgruntled supporters were constantly demanding the head of beleaguered one-time Lille boss Claude Puel for his boring and ineffective style of play, while marquee signing Yoann Gourcuff endured a nightmare first campaign.

The French media reported that Puel had been given his marching orders in the days that followed the end of the season, but Lyon quickly denied the stories. The 49-year-old did, however, part company with the club in late June and was replaced by his assistant, Remi Garde.

The three Europa League slots will be filled by Paris Saint-Germain, Sochaux and Rennes, who all played in fits and starts but couldn't mount a serious challenge. A Qatari investment company's purchase of a 70 per cent stake in PSG in May suggests the financial muscle to aspire to the title next season, and they have already signalled their intent with the signing of Lorient's Kevin Gameiro, Ligue 1's top scorer with 22 goals, for a reported £10m.

Fun at the bottom

For the neutral, things were much more fun down at the bottom of the table. Little Arles-Avignon were all but relegated by Christmas and ended the campaign a full 15 points behind Lens, who continued their yo-yo form of recent seasons by dropping out of the top flight again.

But it was the battle to avoid the third relegation slot that was most intriguing.

Heading into the final day of the season there were just five points separating a staggering 12 clubs, with 10 teams technically capable of going down. The club in the most clear and present danger were Monaco, who occupied 18th spot with 44 points, one less than the group of three clubs directly above them.

Goal difference issues meant that a draw at home to Lyon would have offered Monaco the possibility of overhauling Nancy, who were at home to Lens. But in reality, only a victory would have given them a serious chance of survival.

Big splash... Moussa Sow and his Lille team-mates are in the party mood

In the end it was all academic as Monaco capitulated meekly and were deservedly beaten 2-0. It wasn't so much the fact that the 2004 Champions League finalists and Ligue 1 regulars for the past 34 years fell through the trapdoor that shocked French football, but rather the spineless manner in which Laurent Banide's team surrendered. Monaco gave the impression that they thought they were either too good or too important to go down. The stark reality is that they were neither.

Replacing them in the top flight next season will be surprise Ligue 2 champions Evian. It has been an incredible rise for coach Bernard Casoni's side, who only a year ago were celebrating promotion from the third division. Club shareholder and 1998 World Cup-winner Bixente Lizarazu had promised to run naked through the streets of the town in celebration if the team were promoted.

Joining Evian at French football's top table will be Ajaccio, the Corsican club who clinched promotion with a final day 2-1 win at relegated Nimes, and Dijon, who lost 1-0 at Angers but still grabbed third spot on goal difference from Le Mans, who won 3-2 at Nantes.

Interestingly, the Dijon team features Lesly Malouda, brother of France international Florent Malouda who has joined the board as an investor in the club. When asked how much has he put in, the Chelsea midfielder replied: "We've all agreed not to talk about that. But the figure was agreed before the club had won promotion, so I must be a visionary!"

How much of a visionary, of course, depends on where Dijon finish at the end of the 2011-12 Ligue 1 campaign. WS

For final league table, see page108

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B·PLAYER Biography

Javier Hernandez

After a great first season in England, the sky is the limit for the Mexico and Manchester United striker. Profile by Martin Del Palacio Langer

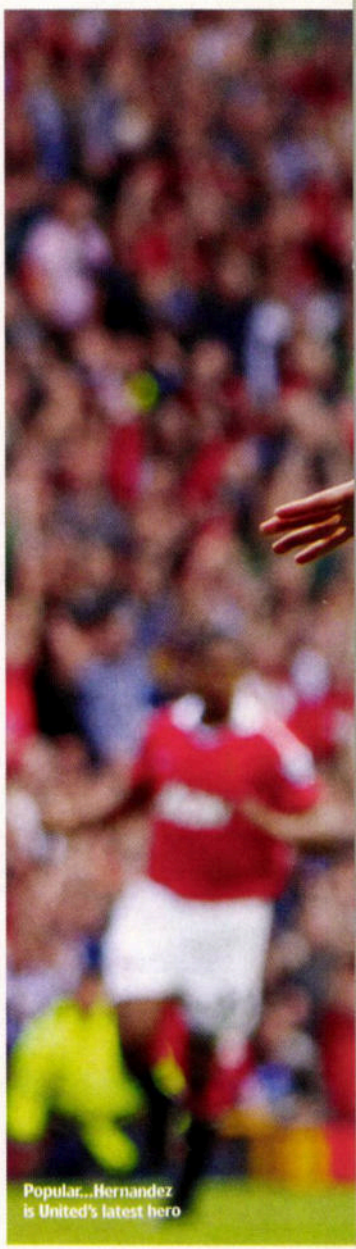
October 2, 2005 is an historic date for Mexican soccer. That day, the "Golden Generation" won the Under-17 World Cup, beating Brazil 3-0 in the Final. And Javier Hernandez was there, at the Estadio Nacional in Peru, celebrating the result.

But "Chicharito" wasn't lifting the trophy alongside Giovani dos Santos and Carlos Vela. He was not on the pitch that day, nor even on the bench. A few weeks before the tournament, coach Jesus Ramirez had told him he would not be part of the group of 20 players that would travel to South America.

Any other player might have, in his disappointment, escaped to somewhere in the world where he would not hear about the team. Not Javier. When Jorge Vergara, the owner of his club side Guadalajara, invited him to Peru to watch the Final from the stands, he did not hesitate. And there, with his father, he enjoyed a momentous day for Mexican football and was just glad for his friends on the pitch.

The story encapsulates Javier "Chicharito" Hernandez. Nobody, no team-mate, no opponent, has a bad word to say about the young Mexican. "A great lad" is how Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson likes to describe Hernandez whenever he talks about him. Dedicated, professional and friendly, the youngster doesn't party and lives, eats and drinks football. He is the dream player for any coach or fan.

Of course, none of this would be



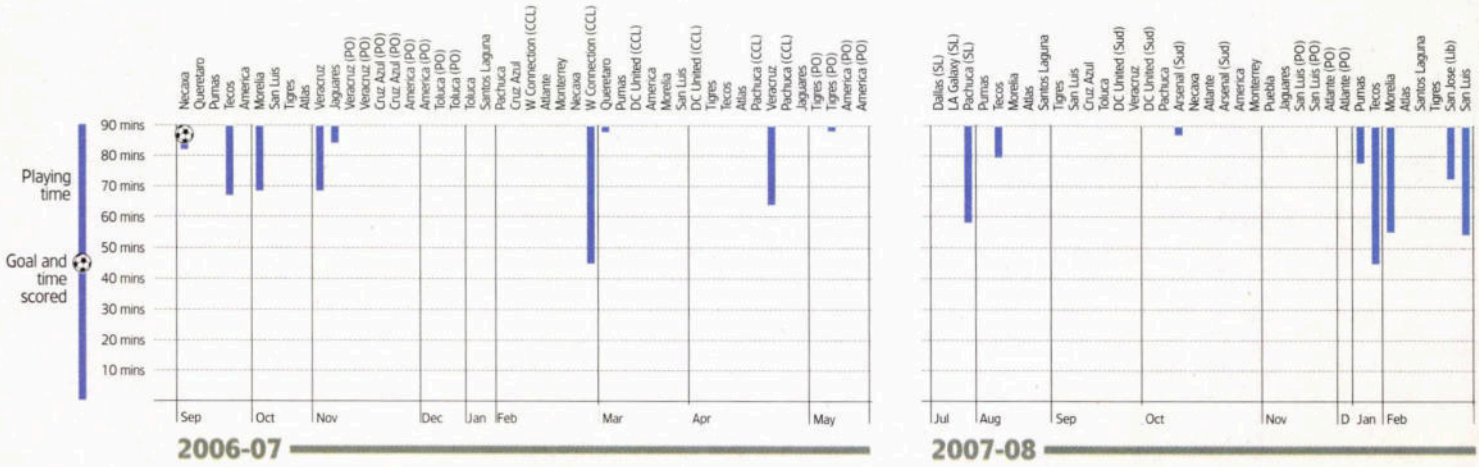
Popular...Hernandez is United's latest hero

TIMELINE: EVERY MATCH, EVERY MINUTE, EVERY GOAL

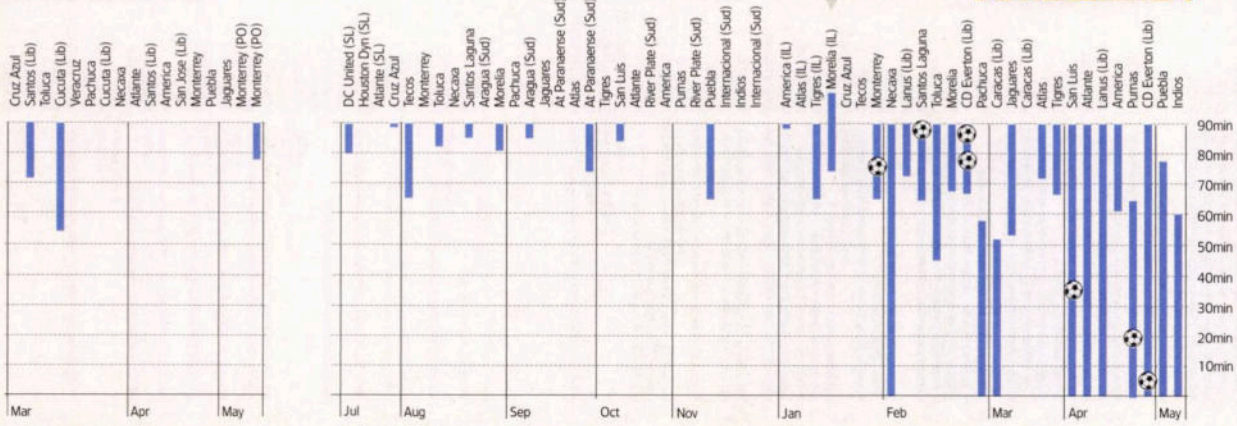
KEY Guadalajara Mexico Manchester United

CCL: CONCACAF Champions League
CL: UEFA Champions League
EC: English FA Cup
ECS: English Community Shield
ELC: English League Cup
GC: CONCACAF Gold Cup
IL: Mexican InterLiga
Lib: Libertadores Cup
PO: Mexican league play-off
SL: Super Liga
Sud: Sudamericana Cup
WCF: World Cup finals

(all other matches either league games or international friendlies)



Jan 11, 2009 – celebrates his first trophy as Guadalajara win the InterLiga against Morelia on penalties.



2008-09

FACT FILE

Javier Hernandez Balcazar

Nationality
Mexican

Age
23 (01.06.88)

Place of birth
Guadalajara, Mexico

Height
1.75m (5ft 9in)

Position
Forward

Teams
Guadalajara 1997-2010, Manchester United 2010-present

Honours
Mexico
CONCACAF Gold Cup 2011
Guadalajara
Mexican apertura 2006, Mexican InterLiga 2009
Manchester United
Premier League 2011, Community Shield 2010

Young talent...in action against New Zealand at the Under-20 World Cup

worth anything if he were not also a great player.

Nearly six years after that experience in Peru, Mexican football had another magical night, this time in Pasadena, California. Before 100,000 spectators, the national team came back from a two-goal deficit to beat arch-rivals USA 4-2 and win the 2011 Gold Cup.

This time, Chicharito was not in the stands but commanding the attack of *El Tri*. He did not score, but at the end of the match he was named player of the tournament and received the top scorer award after managing seven goals in six matches. Surprisingly, in the ensuing press conference, the striker confided: "I think there should be no awards or individual prizes, the team is the only thing that matters."

Family footballers

Javier Hernandez's fate was sealed almost from birth. His father, also named Javier Hernandez, was part of the Mexico squad that participated in the Mexico 86 World Cup, though he did not play, while his maternal grandfather, Tomas Balcazar, scored for the Aztecs against France in the 1954 World Cup in Switzerland.

Even his nickname, "Chicharito" (little pea), comes from his father, "Chicharo," who was named this for his green eyes, which are a rare feature in Mexico.

"All my family tell me that since I was a little boy all my ambitions were linked to football," says Javier Jnr. "Every weekend I would go to the stadium. I learned the names of players, their numbers. My whole life revolved around the game. I talked about it, thought about it and lived for it. When asked what I wanted to be when I grew up my answer was always: 'professional player'."

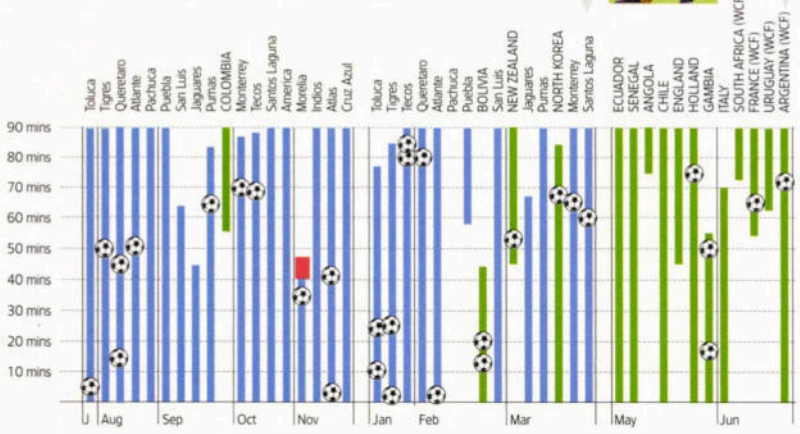
His father had begun his career as a quick winger, but was converted to a wing-back with the passage of time. Exactly the opposite happened with his son. "When I started, I wanted to be like my dad, who was my idol, so I played

World beater... scoring against France in South Africa 2010

KEY ■ Guadalajara ■ Mexico ■ Manchester United

Mar 27, 2010 – plays his last match for Guadalajara as they beat Santos Laguna 6-2 at home.

Jun 27, 2010 – helps Mexico reach the second round of World Cup finals and scores a consolation goal in the 3-1 defeat by Argentina.



2009-10

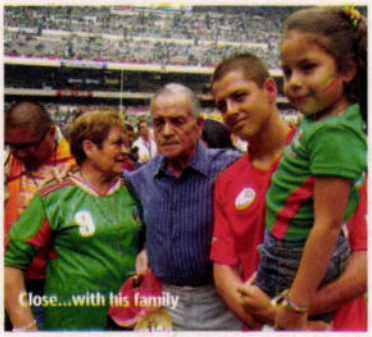
2010-11

right-back" he continues. "But one day a coach saw me and said my place was in the attack, and so the story began."

During his childhood, Javier's family moved town several times, but after the retirement of his father they returned to Guadalajara, where the youngster joined the youth academy of the local team, who are nicknamed Chivas, where his grandfather had been an idol.

"All my life I was Chiva, from when I was a toddler," he recalls. "Obviously, I felt sympathy for the teams where my dad played, but when they faced Chivas I was always awestruck by the stadium, the colour, the passion. My grandfather also kept on telling me stories about the team and the players, and that made me even more passionate about them."

> "All my life I was Chiva, from when I was a toddler"
>
> **Hernandez proclaims his love of Guadalajara**



Close...with his family

Famous father...Javier Hernandez Snr

Chiva...in the colours of Guadalajara

Javier rapidly climbed through the club's youth ranks. However, his talent meant integration into the first team took much longer than usual. Unlike in England, Mexico's underage national sides are taken very seriously. Typically, their players leave their clubs to train with them full-time six months before a tournament. "Chicharito" was part of the Under-17 squad and then played the Under-20 World Cup, and that caused other strikers to overtake him in Guadalajara's pecking order.

His professional debut came in September 2006, against Necaxa. A boy of 18 years, wearing a shirt a size too big, with the number 45, entered the pitch after 81 minutes. Six minutes later, he received a pass in the area, flicked it past a defender, dribbled past another and scored to make it 4-0. A sign of the times to come.

But those days took too long to arrive. With his call-ups to the Under-20s, combined with a lack of confidence from his coaches, Hernandez played only 257 minutes in the next two years. Frustrated, he considered retiring and studying business administration, but was persuaded not to by his father and his grandfather. Patience seemed to be the keyword.

And that patience paid off. In the clausura 2009 season, "Chicharito" received a new opportunity and didn't let it pass. In the third week of the campaign, he appeared as a 60th minute sub away at Monterrey, where the pitch is notoriously difficult. Sixteen minutes later he scored the winner. Thereafter, he never lost his place. That season he scored three more goals, and 11 the next. In September of that year, he made his debut with the Mexico senior side, in a 2-1 defeat to Colombia.

Chicharomania

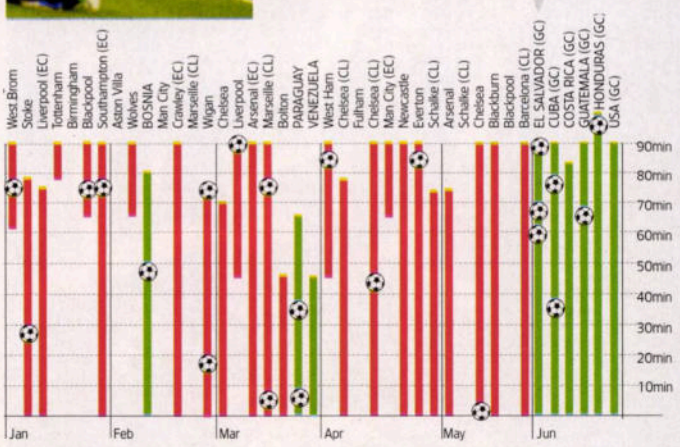
In 2010 his career took off for good. He scored eight goals in the first five games of the season with Guadalajara and four in three matches for the national team. The whole country was struck with "Chicharomania" and his name was linked with a move to Europe.

Mexican media speculated that if he played well at the World Cup he might move to Deportivo La Coruna, PSV Eindhoven or Valencia. But in April Hernandez surprised everyone by announcing he had signed a five-year contract with Manchester United.

"I didn't even tell my family," he says. "They thought we had gone shopping to Atlanta, when we were actually in England, with Sir Alex Ferguson, watching a match. It was a huge surprise for everyone."

Before emigrating to England, Chicharito travelled to South Africa to play in the World Cup, where he emulated his grandfather and scored the winning goal against France. He also scored against Argentina in the 3-1 loss in the second round. He was the fastest player in the tournament, according to statistics from FIFA, but the tournament left a bittersweet taste as coach Javier Aguirre considered him too young and chose veteran Guillermo Franco as his preferred striker. Hernandez only started

Jun 5, 2011 – scores first-ever hat-trick with three goals for Mexico against El Salvador in CONCACAF Gold Cup.



Jun 26, 2011 – helps Mexico to CONCACAF Gold Cup success and walks away with the Most Valuable Player and Golden Boot awards.

Golden boy... on target against Honduras in the CONCACAF Gold Cup semi-final

Secret signing...Hernandez and Ferguson

the match against Argentina, a decision for which fans have not yet forgiven the former Atletico Madrid coach Aguirre.

After playing his part in South Africa, Hernandez arrived late for Manchester United's pre-season. The general consensus was that his first season in England would be a learning process, with some cameos at the end of Premier League games and complete matches in the cups. But the attacker had other ideas. In his debut with the team against the MLS All-Stars he scored just 18 minutes after entering the pitch. Two days later, he scored again, but this time against the Red Devils playing his last game in the jersey of Guadalajara. Ferguson has never celebrated a goal by the opposing team as much.

> "The buy of the century"
> **Wayne Rooney has no doubts about his team-mate's worth to Manchester United**

Hernandez is not only talented, but also lucky. His first official goal for United was against Chelsea in the Community Shield. He ran to meet a cross by Antonio Valencia, but in his desire to score he was too quick and his shot was weak, so much so that it struck him in the face and went into Petr Cech's goal.

In Mexico there is something known as "Jamaicon Syndrome" which describes a player who, whenever he left the country, missed both his home and his mother's tortillas so much, that he just couldn't play abroad. Normally, it was said that this was a sickness that every Mexican player suffered in their first season abroad. Not Javier. Unlike the majority of the world's footballers, Hernandez does not come from a disadvantaged background, but from a middle class family. From childhood, his father insisted he learn English, "because it would be useful in your life".

So when he came to Manchester, the new kid in town did not struggle to adapt. "It helped a lot to speak English from the beginning, I could understand what everyone said and explained what I wanted," he explains. "Having said that... the Mancunian accent was impossible! But little by little I managed to learn it, now I understand a little bit at last."

After seeing him in training at the beginning of the season, Paul Scholes said to Ferguson: "This kid will score 25 goals this year." At the end he was five short, but nobody cared.

At first, Ferguson took advantage of Hernandez's speed and intelligence to use him as a sub, against tiring defences. But when Bulgaria's Dimitar Berbatov went through a bad patch, Ferguson decided that "Little Pea" was ready for the big leagues.

The gamble paid off. Chicharito's two goals gave United a key victory against Marseille in the Champions League knockout phase and he added another one to open the scoring in the semi-final against Chelsea. The Blues suffered him again in the league, when his goal after just 36 seconds left United on the brink of the Premier League title.

Top class

According to United team-mate Wayne Rooney, Hernandez was "the buy of the century". Pep Guardiola says of him "a top-class player with an impressive mobility, he seems far from the action and suddenly he's right in the middle of it", while Lionel Messi, before the Champions League Final, said: "If we are overconfident, Chicharito will send us back on the plane in five minutes."

Hernandez has just turned 23 and has scored 20 goals in 45 games for Manchester United, 21 in 29 matches for the Mexico national team. He was given the Sir Matt Busby Player of the Year award by the fans of the Red Devils. He was named Most Valuable Player of the recent CONCACAF Gold Cup. And yet he doesn't show a hint of arrogance.

"I have to be grateful to all my coaches, to all my colleagues for the way I have been treated, I have been helped," he says. "I can't believe how lucky I am."

How far can Javier Hernandez go? The sky seems to be the limit. WS

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Fear of failure

Jonathan Wilson argues that international football is in danger of losing out to the slicker, superior club game

A year ago it seemed that football might be entering a new age of attrition. Internazionale had won the Champions League playing reactive football, halting – with the help of an Icelandic volcano –Barcelona's *tiki-taka* parade and revelling in the fact that they had only 16 per cent of possession in the second leg of their semi-final win.

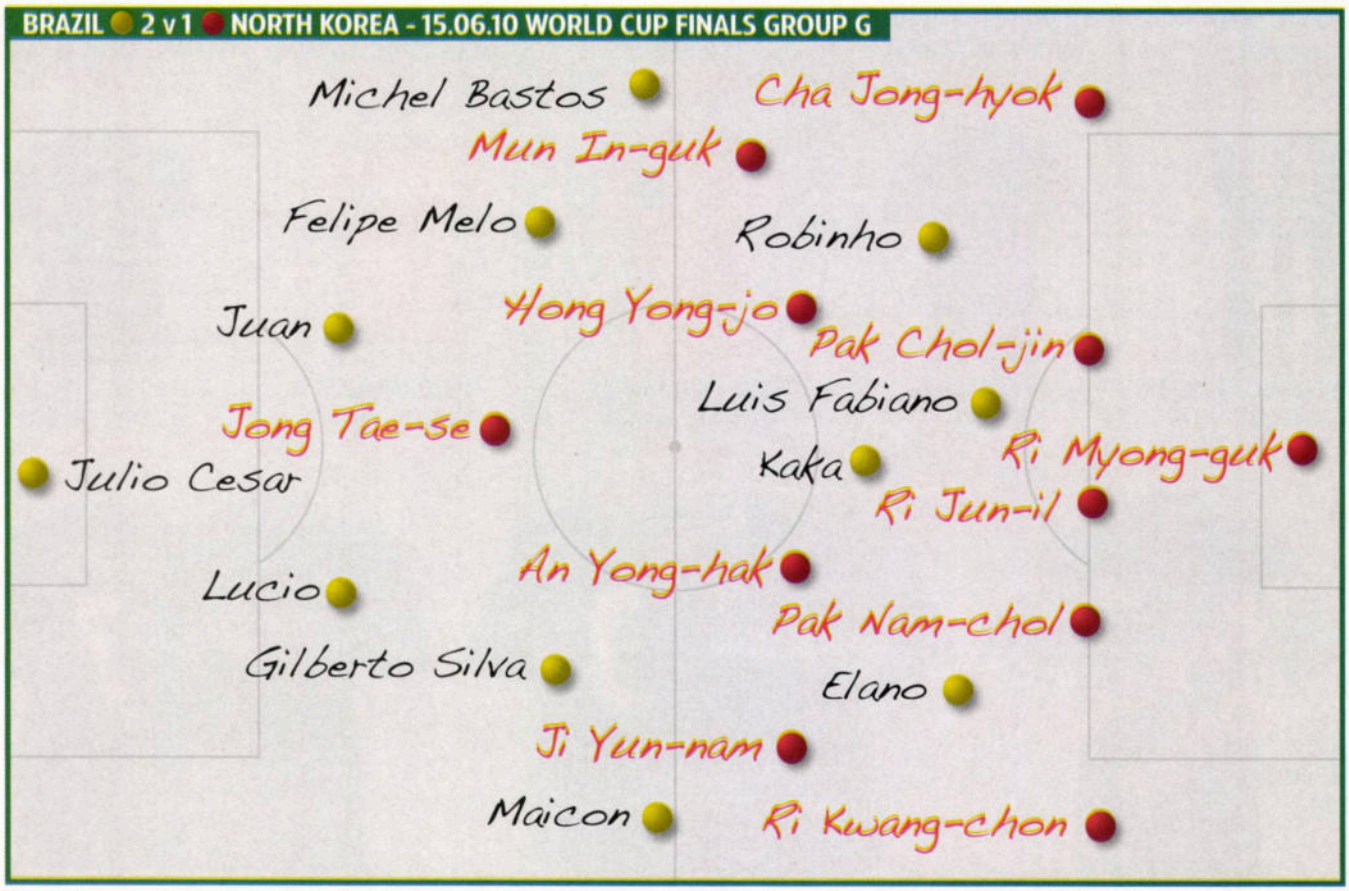
Tiki-taka prevailed in the World Cup, but it was a glum form of it, as Spain, faced with massed defences, simply circulated possession, knowing a mistake would be made and a goal would come eventually. They were the best side at the World Cup by a distance, probably the most deserving World Cup winners – in the sense of being demonstrably better than the opposition - since West Germany in 1990, yet eight goals scored in seven games tells its own story. When Arsene Wenger spoke of "sterile domination", he was talking about Barcelona, but the term is surely more applicable to Spain.

As it turned out, though, the season that followed the last World Cup wasn't much different to the previous one, with the exception that this time, without any volcanoes to stop them, Barcelona passed their way to a second Champions League in three years. Watching club sides again, both in domestic action and in the early qualifying rounds of European competition, there was a tremendous sense of release; after the stodginess of the World Cup, here were teams playing with attacking fluency. When even the opening stages of a club competition are a breath of fresh air, the World Cup has a major problem.

There is limited time to achieve coherence at international level, so most managers start with the basics and pack men behind the ball

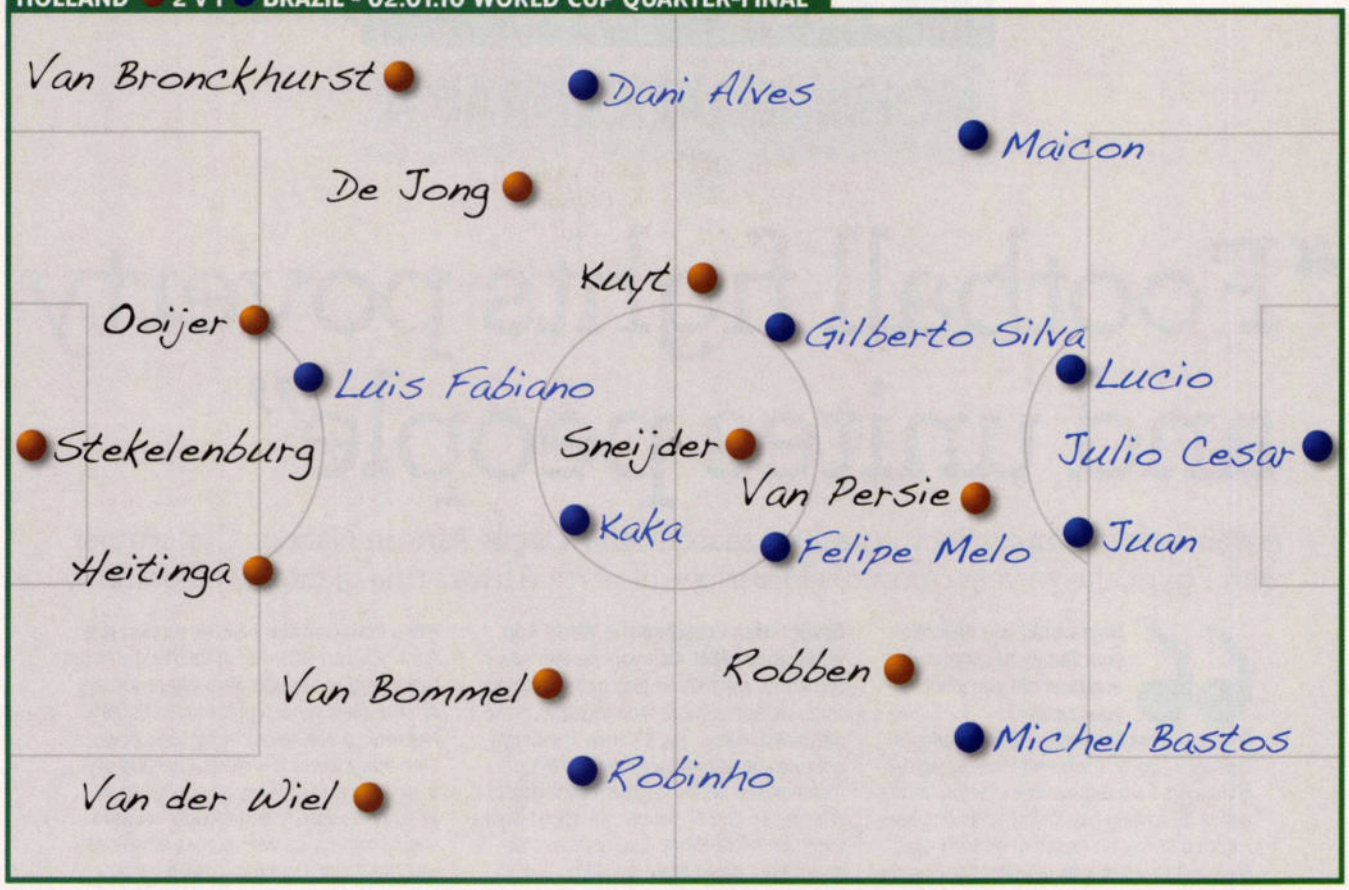
There hasn't been a good World Cup since 1998, and even that has gained in lustre by comparison with what has come since. In Japan/South Korea and Germany it was possible to blame the weather (although it was hot in France), but the South African winter should have been ideal for football. There was controversy over the balls and talk of player fatigue from their domestic seasons, but a significant part of the issue was tactical.

Over the past two decades, football



Damage limitation...unable to compete with Brazil on equal terms, North Korea lined-up in 5-4-1 formation in an attempt to prevent a hammering in their opening group game

HOLLAND 2 v 1 BRAZIL - 02.01.10 WORLD CUP QUARTER-FINAL



Needs must...despite their past association with free-flowing creative football, Holland effectively lined-up with six defensive players against Brazil in South Africa

has become increasingly systematised, a point made clearly in the UK's *Guardian* newspaper each week by the "Secret Footballer", an unnamed Premier League player who, from behind his anonymity, has cast off the code of *omerta* that so often seems to prevent footballers from speaking openly about their craft. "The level of detail that goes into games still, to this day, amazes me," he wrote. "Every player has his own script, what to do, when to do it, information on the player he's up against...we memorise every single set-piece, where we have to stand, run and end up – and even for the other players so we know where everyone else will be at any given time.

"You know that pass when you say to yourself: 'How did he spot that?' Often he didn't need to; he knew the player would be there because, the night before in the hotel, he read about the runs he would be making. It's exactly the same pass after which you might say: 'Who was that to?' The receiving player either forgot to be there or was taken out of the game by a tactical manoeuvre by his opposite number. Football at this level is very chess-like, certainly to those inside the game."

At club level, players have weeks to learn those moves as they train together day after day, and play perhaps 50 games a season. Over time, a mutual understanding develops, the "chess-like" moves becoming instinctive. At international level, though, in the limited time available, it's impossible to achieve that coherence. Moves are less slick because players constantly have to look for team-mates rather than knowing intuitively where they'll be – a difference of a fraction of a second that is compounded over the course of a long move, making it easier for defenders to get wise and cover.

Holland, who gave the world "Total Football," effectively played with six defenders in South Africa linked only by the industry of Dirk Kuyt

So most managers start with the basics and pack men behind the ball. If defenders or holding midfielders go forward, they risk leaving spaces that, at club level, would be filled by team-mates. Most are far less adventurous for their countries, maybe fearing the consequences of a mistake, the effects of which are magnified by relatively few international fixtures played – and the result is the "broken teams" that characterised the last World Cup. Even Holland – whose "Total Football" in the 1970s introduced the world to new levels of internal coherence and movement – effectively played with six defenders and two forwards, linked only by Dirk Kuyt's industry and the creativity of Wesley Sneijder.

The problem is intensified by the number of mismatches at the World Cup, borne out by the confederation tournaments in which the standard is less varied. A 32-team event feels bloated but, more than that, the need to satisfy every confederation means they're not even the best 32 in the world. The likes of North Korea, New Zealand and Algeria have little option but to defend or risk a hammering. Defensive football is, as the great Italian theorist Gianni Brera put it, "the right of the weak", but then what are the weak doing at the World Cup in the first place?

For now, international football draws much larger audiences than even the best club football, but the gap is closing. Empty stands in South Africa and estimates that only two-thirds of the expected 450,000 overseas visitors materialised must also be troubling. What if this is evidence not of the global economic crisis but of a growing disillusionment with international football? What if frustration at the lack of quality and entertainment starts to outweigh the patriotic urge to watch games?

Bad football, no matter how packaged, cannot be a spectacle forever.

Those countries who missed out on hosting the World Cup in 2022 may feel they had a very lucky escape. WS

Facetoface

MOHAMED ABOUTRAIKA

"Football fights poverty and unites people"

A domestic champion for the past six seasons and a triple African Nations Cup winner with Egypt, the 32-year-old midfielder is one of north Africa's true giants of the game

How would you describe your family background and how did you start your career?
I'm from a poor family, like the majority of families in Egypt. I suffered a lot during my childhood. I worked in a brick factory at the age of 12 to help pay for my schooling and I started to rely on myself at an early age. My parents put in a lot of effort bringing me up and my childhood experience helped shape my whole life afterwards. I played football with my friends in the streets until one of my neighbours took me to Tersana Sporting Club, who are a second division side in Egypt, for a trial. I played for them for 12 years, until moving to Al Ahly eight years ago.

You always seem to score crucial goals at vital times. How does this happen?
It's a gift from God. Whatever I do I can't decide that I'll score the winner or score in stoppage time. I always thank God for this gift. I hope it continues.

You played against Brazil and Italy in 2009. How did it feel to play at this level of the game?
It was a wonderful experience. The Confederations Cup gave us the feeling of playing top quality football in a tournament that everyone watches. It gave us the chance to be under the spotlight worldwide. Egypt definitely has enough talent to be able to challenge teams like Brazil and Italy.

What were your thoughts before playing in those matches?
We felt we had nothing to lose. It's not like we play them every day. This was an opportunity. We weren't expected to win. Instead, we just hoped to show the world our football and prove ourselves. We said to ourselves beforehand: "Brazilians and Italians are also normal human beings; they don't have three legs."

Egypt haven't reached the World Cup finals since 1990. Can you explain why?
Our critics say that we play better football when we spend more time together in the pre-match camp, and it's true. The longer time we spend together before playing matches, the better the team harmony. In the African Cup of Nations we spend weeks together; in the World Cup qualifiers we meet three days before a match.

Have you lost hope of ever playing in the World Cup?
It's getting harder for me now to participate in the World Cup, especially because of my age. However, I think with every failure we experience we have to come out of it with new hope. I still have this hope and believe I can do it. I'll fight for it until the end. It's a goal that's always in the back of my head.

Do you still think football unifies people?
Definitely. Football fights poverty and unites people. Away from playing and scoring goals, football sets values and principles, delivers different messages to people and nations. Political messages, economical messages and many other things.

How important is your faith to you?
I'm a Muslim and I'm proud of it. You get the physical strength from physical training, but the spiritual power comes from God. Your relationship with God strengthens you much more in your life. This is the simple equation: God created us with a body and a soul; you can feed your body from the earth, but you can't feed your soul except from God. I think this is what everyone seeks, but you can't feel it until you have it.

There's a famous photo of you praying in Cairo's Tahrir Square on the day Hosni Mubarak stepped down. Can you tell us the story behind this picture?
There's no story. I was brought up being taught that there is right and wrong. I'm gifted from God that I always support the right. You can either be in the middle of the action, or just support from where you are. After the last speech of former president Mubarak, a day before he stepped down, I felt that there was a massive feeling of frustration and sadness among those at El Tahrir Square. Then I thought maybe I should try to raise the people's morale as much as I can. I wanted to deliver the message that we still could do it.

Do you think you should have joined the protesters earlier?
I think I'd join in earlier if I could go back in time, but I thought about joining the protesters so many times and something always arose that made me decide to wait a bit more before I took the decision.

Did you worry that if you had shown support for the revolution, and it had failed, it might have harmed your career?
Not at all. I believe that in our lives come some situations where you need to take strong stands with no calculations and without putting the possible bad consequences in mind. As long as you believe that you're supporting the right cause you shouldn't doubt yourself.

How did you feel when you found out that Mubarak had stepped down?
Just like any other Egyptian, I suffered from corruption that used to waste the majority of the country's resources. I felt that I took my rights back.

Are you interested in politics and staying in the political field?
Not at all. I belong to all parties. I believe that anyone who can serve the country sincerely and honestly will get my support, but I'm not willing to run for any type of elections.

Interview by Abdul Rahman Magdy

On the difference between African and European footballers...

"Egyptian players have intelligence and talent, but players in Egypt and in Africa generally lack the culture of professionalism in football. They also fail to organise their thoughts and set specific goals in their careers"

Facetoface

SVEN GORAN ERIKSSON

"Sooner or later, England will have a winter break"

Back in England with second-tier side Leicester City, the country's former national manager shares his thoughts on the game – at club and international level

What would you say are the most important characteristics of a good manager?
Well, you have to know your football, of course, and to have a philosophy of football. Then I think you have to be a man manager, you have to know how to treat people. It will become even more important in the future. Then you have a big job with the media as well, which is becoming more and more important, but it's part of the job.

Is there a big difference between club and international management?
No. You have to have a good relationship with your players, the owners of your club or the directors at the FA if you work there. And you have to try to have a good relationship with the press. That's very important, no matter what job you have.

Is there a big difference between managing in Sweden, Portugal, Italy and England?
It's more or less the same job. It's only that if you are at a big club or in a big country like England – or, of course, the manager of England, which is a huge job – that the pressure from the media is much, much more than if you are at a small club in Sweden. That's the main difference. But as for training and working with the players, it's the same.

Can you tell if a player is going to be a good manager in future?
You can't be sure, but if you take [Manchester City manager] Roberto Mancini as an example, I had him as a player for eight years and then he became my assistant manager for a year. I could have bet that he would be a manager because he was in one way a coach even when he was a player. He had a great interest in the game and a great passion for football, for technique and for tactics. He was always very, very curious about all that kind of thing, even as a player he wanted to know about training. He took an interest in when we trained, how we trained, the techniques we used and things like that.

Do you think David Beckham can get back into the international side and break the record for the number of England caps?
It depends how he performs for his club. If he is still performing very well, then why not? I don't think [England manager Fabio] Capello has said it's over for him. It always depends on how he performs. I'm sure Capello will send someone to look at him.

What sort of role would suit him when he retires? Would he make a good manager, despite his reluctance?
He could do that easily, but I'm not sure he's interested. What his role in football will be in the future depends very much on him and on what he wants to do. I'm sure he will stay in football in one way or another, but in what role I don't know. He can do whatever he wants to do, I guess.

Beckham seems to be a great diplomat as well. Do you think the FA should try to find a role for him with that in mind?
I'm sure the FA or some important club will find work for him. He will not have that problem, he will not be out of work I think! He has a lot of qualities and charisma, more than most other people in the world.

You were with the Ivory Coast in South Africa and saw how England struggled, along with many other big countries. Do you know what went wrong for them and why it happened?
It's very difficult to say from the outside, you have to live with a team to answer a question like that. But one thing is always the big enemy of big teams – and especially England – and that is tiredness. The Premier League players are coming from a long, long season without any break whatsoever. I think that's one of the reasons why England – before my time, during my time and after my time – have not been able to reach a Final or win a Final. It's one of the reasons but a big one. For the last World Cup it's hard to say what else. I was there, of course, but I was not in the England camp so it's difficult to answer.

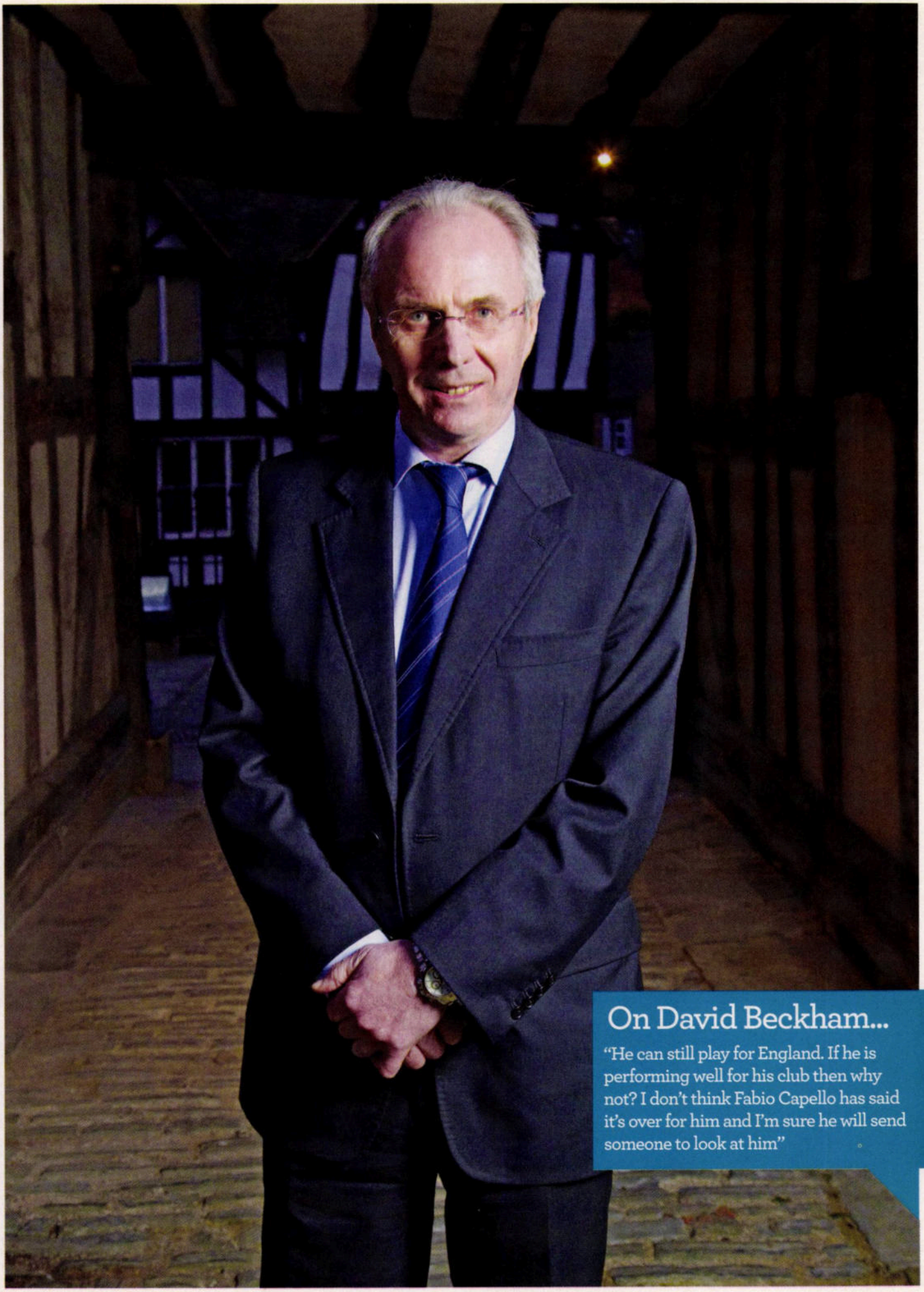
What areas will Fabio Capello and the FA be looking at to improve things?
I'm quite sure, sooner or later, there will be a winter break in England. That will be very good for the clubs, very good for the players and very good for the England team.

Would you have liked a winter break to be introduced when you were in charge?
Yes, and I tried very hard, but it was like banging your head against a wall! Sooner or later, though, it will happen, I believe that. I think more and more people realise that everyone needs a break during winter time. It could be a very short break, but that's enough. It's necessary.

Have you found a big difference between the Premier League and the Championship in terms of managing?
It's no real difference at all. The only difference is the quality of individual players is a little bit higher in the Premier League. But the standard of the Championship is extremely high – it's, for sure, the best second division in the world and every game you play is extremely competitive. It's good quality as well. Of course it's not up to Premier League standard, but it's very close.

Interview by Chris Hatherall

Sven Goran Eriksson was speaking on behalf of Castrol, the official performance partners of the League Managers Association



On David Beckham...

"He can still play for England. If he is performing well for his club then why not? I don't think Fabio Capello has said it's over for him and I'm sure he will send someone to look at him"

SEARA
BANCO
CSU

Victors...celebrating this year's Libertadores Cup success

ClubFocus

SANTOS

Out of Pele's shadow

Santos are club champions of South America for the first time since the early 1960s. **Tim Vickery reports**

On April 14, 1912, the same day the Titanic went down, Santos FC were founded. Football fans will consider it a fair swap, because this is a club with a truly remarkable history.

When the young Pele joined Santos in 1956 he was slipping into a top-class team which had just won the Sao Paulo state title for only the second time. With experienced, quality players around him, Pele blossomed, and within a few years he was the undisputed spearhead of the side that won the Libertadores Cup and world titles in 1962 and 1963, playing some stunning football along the way.

For financial reasons the club abandoned the Libertadores after 1965 – had they stayed in they would probably have won more titles and would be remembered with greater frequency in debates about the best club side of all time. But Pele and his supporting cast had to be paid, and before TV money bankrolled the Libertadores it was far more viable for Santos to meet their commitments travelling the world to play endless friendlies.

After the Pele era the club inevitably slipped back. Santos is a port an hour's

MAJOR HONOURS

2 Intercontinental Cup: 1962, 1963
1 Recopa Intercontinental: 1968
3 Libertadores Cup: 1962, 1963, 2011
1 CONMEBOL Cup: 1998
2 Campeonato Brasileiro Serie A: 2002, 2004
1 Copa do Brasil: 2010
5 Taca Brasil: 1961, 1962, 1963, 1964, 1965
1 Taca de Prata: 1968
19 Campeonato Paulista: 1935, 1955, 1956, 1958, 1960, 1961, 1962, 1964, 1965, 1967, 1968, 1969, 1973, 1978, 1984, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011
5 Torneio Rio-Sao Paulo: 1959, 1963, 1964, 1966, 1997

Simply the best...national champions in 2004

World beaters...Pele (front row, second from right) and his Santos team-mates

Super star...Pele won two Libertadores Cups

Santos have re-established their association with bold and carefree football, and blooding young players

drive down the hill from Sao Paulo and, compared to the giants of the metropolis, the club has a relatively restricted catchment area.

In 2001 the club invested in big name veterans but did badly. However, an early elimination in the following year's Sao Paulo tournament gave coach Emerson Leao more time to prepare for the Brazilian championship, and he found the courage to go with youth. The success of his decision helped re-establish the association of Santos with bold and carefree football, whereby gifted young players would be given a chance. Led by the teenage duo of Diego and Robinho, Santos won the 2002 national title and went all the way to the Final of the following year's Libertadores Cup.

Over the next few years they reached the quarter-finals three times and the semis once, and now the Neymar/Ganso generation has ended the 49-year wait for title number three.

The current side started to click last year under Dorival Junior, one of Brazil's most interesting coaches. Based around the playmaking of Paulo Henrique Ganso and the attacking talent of Neymar, he constructed a team that was almost retro in its approach.

Brazilian football in recent times has been dominated by the attacking full-back and the quick counter-attack, but Dorival did something different. "We hardly attacked down the flanks," he said, "and no one seemed to notice."

Instead they were working elaborate moves through the middle, with pace,

THE POWER CURVE

The key figures behind Santos

LUIS ALVARO RIBEIRO

Elected president in 2009, the real-estate businessman's big idea is for Santos to set up its own investment fund and thereby reduce the dependence on partners and outside investors.

MURICY RAMALHO

Legendarily grumpy coach, four times Brazilian champion who has now at last laid to rest his Libertadores hoodoo.

PELE

Global symbol of the club whose wayward son Edinho, who was briefly Santos' goalkeeper, is on the coaching staff.

MARCELO TEIXEIRA

President from 1991-93 and 2000-09, who invested in training facilities. Lost to Ribeiro in an acrimonious election in 2009.

NEI PANDOLFO

Former centre-back who took over as director of football early this year after the sacking of another former player, Paulo Jamelli.

CLODOALDO

Ex-midfielder who has held several executive positions. Not involved now, but remains a respected voice.

MILTON NEVES

High-profile journalist, adept at reeling off team line-ups from yesteryear, who is an outspoken Santos supporter.

Big attraction...Santos will do well to hang on to Ganso (right)

Respect...Pele (left) and Ramalho

Reward...the fans sense the good times are back

skill and plenty of options for the man on the ball. Their style of play and youthful exuberance caught the popular imagination, and there were huge calls for Neymar and Ganso to be included in last year's World Cup squad; calls which, probably wisely, went unheeded.

Dangerous precedent

Such sudden adulation is hard for a youngster to cope with and Dorival's grip on the team began to loosen when Ganso refused to be substituted in last year's Sao Paulo state championship Final. The player was much praised in the media for his strength of personality, but a dangerous precedent had been set. Not long afterwards Neymar threw an extraordinary tantrum when he was not allowed to take a penalty. Dorival pushed for the player to suffer a prolonged suspension, and was himself sacked – simply because Santos preferred to be at full strength against historical rivals Corinthians.

A caretaker, Marcelo Martelotte, took over until Adilson Batista, another coach with an attacking reputation, took over at the start of this year. But after just one defeat in 11 games Batista was mysteriously sacked and Martelotte stepped in again – until a very different character was ready to take charge.

Muricy Ramalho is from the "if you want a spectacle, go to the theatre" school of coaches. He won last year's Brazilian title with Fluminense, and a 2006 to 2008 trio of wins with Sao Paulo, whose captain Rogerio Ceni recalls: "He never wanted to run big risks. He set up a very strong system of marking, he liked to have a tall team and concentrated a lot on set-pieces."

Dorival Junior had argued that "the great teams defend by attacking", but Ramalho wanted Santos to defend by defending better.

Under Martelotte, Santos were facing first-round elimination from the Libertadores after drawing their first two games and then losing away to Colo Colo of Chile. Ramalho was in the stands for the return, when Martelotte's team opened up a three-goal lead but had to hang on for a 3-2 win, with Neymar, Ze Eduardo and Elano sent off.

Ramalho saw that he had to crack down on the team's youthful excesses of petulance, and also that he needed to tighten up the defence. There was no great secret here. The midfield was withdrawn closer to the defensive line, with man-marker Adriano given the responsibility of protecting the centre-backs. Indeed, Adriano, who played just five games for Santos in the league last year, is the most eloquent symbol of the side under its current coach.

Santos became more like a conventional contemporary Brazilian side, defending deep and creating space for the counter-attack - with the difference that when they launch their quick breaks they can count on the ability of Neymar.

However, they could have come unstuck. Wins in the last two group

FINANCES

MULTIPLE SPONSORS PAY THEIR WAY

Any sale of Neymar and Ganso to Europe would help Santos pay off a considerable part of their debts, estimated to be around £70.7million in 2010 by auditors Crowe Horwarth RCS.

Santos enjoy revenues of around £25m, with sponsorship contracts divided up between different companies. BMG bank pays £5.9m to be the main shirt sponsor, while sportswear company Netshoes pay £2.16m for sleeve sponsorship, food company Seara pay £1.18m as "shoulders sponsors" and CSU (technology) pay £790,000 to sponsor the numbers.

A TV deal currently worth £12.5m is set to double from next year after a new deal was agreed with TV Globo.

Santos received £2m in prize money for winning this year's Libertadores Cup.

games, away to Cerro Porteno of Paraguay and at home to Deportivo Tachira of Venezuela, ensured Santos made it to the knockout stage, but then they rode their luck to get past America of Mexico. A 1-0 win at home was followed by a rearguard action and a goalless draw away. Defending deep and unable to retain possession, Santos were under siege and only escaped thanks to goalkeeper Rafael.

A 2-1 aggregate win in the quarter-finals ended the strange campaign of Colombia's Once Caldas – no wins at home, unbeaten away – but while the Brazilians were clearly superior they had to sweat until the final whistle. It was a similar story in the semi-final against Cerro Porteno. After winning the home leg 1-0, they should have been home and dry with a 3-1 half-time lead in the return game. Once again, though, deep defence and little possession gave them problems, with the Paraguayans firing in two long shots. Santos were rocking towards the end. Luis Caceres rattled their bar and had his shot gone in the last moments would have been awkward.

Then came a stroke of luck. Argentina's Velez Sarsfield missed a penalty and had a goal harshly disallowed, to allow Penarol of Uruguay, who are a much more limited side, to squeeze through to the Final. Penarol's progress through the knockout rounds had been dependent on the away-goals rule, which is not in effect in the Final. Once Santos had held them in the first leg in Montevideo, the odds were in favour of the Brazilians wrapping up the title in Sao Paulo.

Barcelona await

From a Santos point of view, the build-up has already begun towards a clash with Barcelona in the Club World Club in Japan this December. Against the likes of Xavi and Lionel Messi, how will Ganso and Neymar measure up? Providing, of course, that they are still with Santos.

While offers for the pair are coming in, club president Luis Alvaro Ribeiro guarantees that they will stay, and with his position up for re-election at the end of the year, he has a powerful incentive to make sure they do. Next year is the club's centenary, and he has a valuable negotiating tool to keep them for the celebrations: it will be much easier for both of them to be released to play in the 2012 Olympics if they are still based in Brazil.

After that, though, it is hard to see how their move across the Atlantic can be postponed. Ribeiro talks of holding on to Neymar and Ganso beyond the club's centenary, but there is probably more chance of raising the Titanic. WS

THE SQUAD

GOALKEEPERS

ARANHA

Age 30 (17.11.80)
2011 Lib Cup: 0 games
Signed at the start of the year from Atletico-MG expecting to be first choice, but forced to take a back seat by the form of Rafael.

RAFAEL

Age 21 (20.05.90)
2011 Lib Cup: 14 games
One of the heroes of the campaign. Showed admirable maturity and saved the team with a superb display away to America of Mexico in the first knockout round.

DEFENDERS

ALEX SANDRO

Age 20 (26.01.91)
2011 Lib Cup: 10 games
Hugely promising left-back, tall, strong and skilful. Brazil Under-20 international.

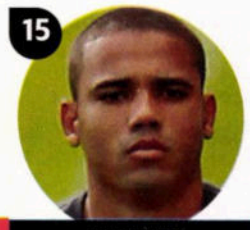
BRUNO AGUIAR

Age 25 (25.03.86)
2011 Lib Cup: 4 games
Giant reserve centre-back.

BRUNO RODRIGO

Age 26 (12.04.85)
2011 Lib Cup: 1 appearance
Big centre-back who did well when surprisingly brought in to replace the suspended Edu Dracena in the first leg of the Final.

MIDFIELDERS



ADRIANO

Age 24 (29.05.87)
2011 Lib Cup: 13 games
Tough tackling, mobile marker who came into his own in the closing stages of the campaign.

ALAN PATRICK

Age 20 (13.05.91)
2011 Lib Cup: 5 games (1 goal)
Promising playmaker who scored a vital goal away to Once Caldas. Under-20 international who joined the Brazilian contingent at Shakhtar Donetsk after the Final.

AROUCA

Age 24 (11.08.86)
2011 Lib Cup: 10 games
Busy little fetch-and-carry midfielder who is finally starting to fulfil the promise shown as an Under-17 international.

FORWARDS

BORGES

Age 30 (05.10.80)
2011 Lib Cup: 0 games
Quick turning striker who has just teamed up once more with Ramalho - too late for the Libertadores, but should be important in the Club World Cup.

DIOGO

Age 24 (26.05.87)
2011 Lib Cup: 3 games
Once much touted, has done little since coming back from Greece last year, first with Flamengo and then with Santos, where he has spent much of his time injured.

KEIRRISON

Age 22 (03.12.88)
2011 Lib Cup: 3 games
Centre-forward whose career has stalled since being acquired by Barcelona and loaned out to a succession of clubs.

THE KIT

Home kit

Second kit

Third kit

THE COACH

Muricy Ramalho
Age 55 (30.11.55)
One-time Sao Paulo midfielder who led them to three consecutive national championships as coach. Won the title again, in 2010, with Fluminense, who earlier in the year refused to release him to take the national job after the World Cup. Joined Santos in April 2011.

DURVAL
Age 30 (11.07.80)
2011 Lib Cup: 4 games
Powerful centre-back signed from Sport at the start of last year. Has been a surprise hit, ending the campaign in excellent form.

EDU DRACENA
Age 30 (18.05.81)
2011 Lib Cup: 13 games (1 goal)
Club captain and gangling centre-back with experience in both Greece and Turkey. Former Under-20 international.

JONATHAN
Age 25 (27.02.86)
2011 Lib Cup: 6 games (1 goal)
Attacking right-back signed from Cruzeiro at the start of the year whose progress has been halted by injury.

LEO
Age 35 (06.07.75)
2011 Lib Cup: 12 games
Busy left-back who made his name in the Santos side of 2002-04. Came back from Benfica in 2009. Former Brazil international.

PARA
Age 25 (14.02.86)
2011 Lib Cup: 10 games
Solid little right-back signed from Santo Andre in 2008.

DANILO
Age 19 (15.07.91)
2011 Lib Cup: 14 games (4 goals)
Tall and talented, strong and versatile. Right-back for Brazil's Under-20s and occasionally for his club, but more often used as a central midfielder.

ELANO
Age 30 (14.06.81)
2011 Lib Cup: 12 games (3 goals)
Current Brazil international who came to prominence with the Santos side of 2002-04. Returned this year after a frustrating time in Europe. Remains skilful, versatile - and bafflingly inconsistent.

FELIPE ANDERSON
Age 18 (15.04.93)
2011 Lib Cup: 1 appearance
The next hope on the conveyor belt, he was called up for the Under-20 World Cup squad.

Paulo Henrique GANSO
Age 21 (12.10.89)
2011 Lib Cup: 7 games (1 goal)
Left-footed playmaker with a magnificent eye for a pass. Considered a key player in the national team, but has suffered with injuries.

RODRIGO POSSEBON
Age 22 (13.02.89)
2011 Lib Cup: 5 games
Tall central midfielder who has made little impression since joining from Manchester United.

MAIKON LEITE
Age 22 (03.08.88)
2011 Lib Cup: 6 games (1 goal)
A flying substitute for the counter-attack who has now joined Palmeiras.

NEYMAR
Age 19 (05.02.92)
2011 Lib Cup: 13 games (6 goals)
Breathtakingly gifted and often controversial, the boy prince of the Brazilian game was the outstanding player of the competition.

ZE EDUARDO
Age 23 (29.10.87)
2011 Lib Cup: 13 games (1 goal)
Central striker who struggled for form during the campaign, but attempted to compensate with unselfish movement. Now joining Genoa in Italy.

THE STADIUM

ESTADIO VILA BELMIRO
Opened in 1916, the stadium's formal name honours Urbano Caldeira, a former player, manager and chairman of Santos. Although it has a capacity of little more than 20,000 it is rarely full.

Talentscout

Marvin MARTIN

COUNTRY	France
CLUB	Sochaux
POSITION	Midfielder
AGE	23 (10.01.88)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	June 2011, v Ukraine
INTERNATIONAL CAPS	2 (2 goals)

Fifteen minutes was all it took for the Sochaux attacking midfielder to turn his France debut into something of a one-man show. Appearing as a late substitute in June's friendly in Ukraine, Martin scored twice and set up another in his side's 4-1 victory.

A well-placed corner for Younes Kaboul to head home was sandwiched in between a stunning 25-yard strike and a smart finish from close range after being played in by Karim Benzema – and all in the final four minutes of the match. Added to a success rate of 12 completed passes out of 12, Martin's perfect debut displayed no sign of first-night nerves and not even a hint of self-doubt.

The 15th Frenchman to score twice on his debut for *Les Bleus*, his exploits immediately had the media comparing him to Zinedine Zidane who, back in 1994 against the Czech Republic, also celebrated his first cap with a double. But as coach Laurent Blanc was quick to point out, impressive quarter-of-an-hour cameos are only the starting point of the journey.

"I guess the comparisons with Zidane were inevitable," Blanc conceded. "Let's not get ahead of ourselves. While Marvin performed fantastically on coming on, he now has to continue moving forward, to keep up the good work and show the same attitude.

"He has great potential. I'm delighted that he seized his opportunity. This is what I want to see from every newcomer to the squad – the desire for more than the role of replacement. Marvin didn't hold back in any shape or form. He set out to play, to take risks and be creative. Exactly what he does for his club."

Ironically, goalscoring has never been one of Martin's strongest suits. Last season he found the net just three times, but it was his touch and intelligence in possession, as well as an ability to conjure up a defence-splitting through ball, that earned him a string of rave reviews and ultimately a place in Blanc's squad.

No other player in France's top division contributed as many assists (17) as the 23-year-old Parisian last term, and it seems to be mandatory these days for French football journalists to mention him in the same breath as Iniesta or Xavi; a parallel which is not so exaggerated as it may initially sound.

Like the Barcelona midfielders, Martin is a pint-sized metronome, a practitioner of the art of pass and move, someone who can always be relied upon to ensure fluidity to his team's attacking play.

"For me, a beautiful pass is worth as much as a goal. Effectiveness is what I'm about," says Martin in a neat and concise self-portrait.

A strong sense of self-belief also helps. As a 13-year-old, he was refused a place at the French national academy because he did not meet arbitrary height and athletic requirements. Undaunted, he continued to work on his game and within a year had gained entry to the youth scheme at Sochaux, the eastern French club backed by the giant Peugeot car company.

He could not have chosen better. Outstanding young players have been rolling off the Sochaux conveyor belt since the 1950s – including France internationals such as Joel Bats, Bernard Genghini, Franck Sauzee, Yannick Stopyra and Gerard Soler – and the club have never hesitated to give talented kids a chance in the first team. Martin was duly given his break and is on course to become one of the academy's most notable graduates.

Nick Bidwell

> "For me, a beautiful pass is worth as much as a goal. Effectiveness is what I'm about"
> Marvin Martin

Thulani SERERO

COUNTRY	South Africa
CLUB	Ajax (Hol)
POSITION	Midfielder
AGE	21 (11.04.90)
PREVIOUS CLUB	Ajax Cape Town
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	February 2011, v Kenya
CAPS	1

After walking away with all the major individual accolades of the South African season, the midfielder was then presented with a £2million move to Dutch champions Ajax.

It is the logical step up for a prodigy from Soweto who left home in his early teens for Cape Town, over 1,000km away. He has been in the Ajax system for seven years now and should find the transition to Holland easier than most.

Serero will, however, find himself in a situation where he must now fight for a first-team place, while at the same time affirming the star-like status lumped on his shoulders over the past year.

His quick bursts of acceleration, an ability to glide into attacking positions and several wonder goals saw him crowned Footballer of the Year and also take the Player's Player of the Season award as he played a prominent role in propelling Ajax Cape Town to the verge of their first title, only to flop on the final day and lose out on goal difference to Orlando Pirates.

It was the only blot on a near-perfect campaign for the 21-year-old.

It was veteran Dutch coach Foppe De Haan who encouraged the Amsterdam club to buy him. They own 51 per cent of Ajax Cape Town and have a deal for reduced prices on players – but they still had to increase the price to beat off interest from Club Brugge.

Serero also looks set for a major role in the national side and was set to replace the injured Steven Pienaar against Egypt in June until having to pull out with a slight knock himself. His debut against Kenya in February means he has played at all levels for his country, including the Under-20s at the 2009 World Youth Cup in Egypt.

Mark Gleeson

Bruno MARTINS Indi

COUNTRY	Holland
CLUB	Feyenoord
POSITION	Defender
AGE	19 (08.02.92)
LINKED WITH	Milan (Ita)

After a catastrophic start to his professional career, the 19-year-old Feyenoord defender has done extremely well to redress the balance, going on to establish himself as one of the best prospects in Holland and reportedly featuring on the shopping list of the likes of Milan.

After a red card on his Eredivisie debut in a 2-0 defeat at NAC last August – the youngest Feyenoord player to be sent off in the top flight – and then conceding an own goal in the 10-0 thrashing by PSV a couple of months later, Martins Indi might have been traumatised for life. But he jumped straight back in the saddle and whether at left-back (his long-held position) or in central defence (where coach Mario Been sees his long-term future), he has gone from strength to strength, proving a match for anybody with his speed, toughness and tenacity.

Recruited at the age of 14 from Rotterdam club Spartaan 20, his goal was a pro contract for which he was prepared to make any sacrifice, even working on his game and physique at home after training.

"Bruno's drive was amazing," says former Feyenoord Under-19s coach Jean-Paul Van Gastel. "Every day he wanted to make a statement, to impress. If we had sprint sessions, he had to win them."

It was only a matter of time before he stepped into the senior side and that moment duly arrived during a pre-season tournament in Portugal last year. Chosen at centre-back against Aston Villa, he had no problem marking the vastly more experienced John Carew and Emile Heskey out of the game – and as reward soon made his competitive bow in a Europa League tie with Gent.

Born in Portugal to parents from the west African state of Guinea-Bissau, Martins Indi moved to Rotterdam with his family at just three months old and to date has represented both the Dutch Under-17s and Under-19s.

Nick Bidwell

Jan MORAVEK

COUNTRY	Czech Republic
CLUB	Schalke (Ger)
POSITION	Midfielder
AGE	21 (01.11.89)
PREVIOUS CLUBS	Bohemians 1905, Kaiserslautern (Ger, loan)
INTERNATIONAL DEBUT	March 2010, v Scotland
INTERNATIONAL CAPS	2 (0 goals)

The Czechs have much riding on the future development of this classy attacking midfielder. With the national team falling away in recent years – they failed to reach the last-eight of Euro 2008 and did not qualify for the last World Cup – and creative mainstays Tomas Rosicky, Jan Polak and Jaroslav Plasil arguably on the wane, they clearly need new blood and the Schalke youngster could be the answer to their prayers.

A fulcrum of the Under-21 side which surpassed all expectations by reaching the semi-finals of this summer's European Championship in Denmark, Moravek is already a full international and is blessed with a mouth-watering array of attributes – not least his impressive vision and range of pass, delicate close control, shooting power and intuitive feel for the game.

While perfectly able to influence proceedings on either flank, he is at his most effective operating centrally on the shoulder of a lone front runner. Simply slot him into a 4-2-3-1 system and let his creative instincts run wild.

A product of the Bohemians academy – the establishment which honed the skills of 1970s

Czechoslovakia midfield star Antonin Panenka – Moravek was a first-teamer at 17 and soon found himself categorised as one of the most gifted young talents in the country, so much so that in the summer of 2009 Schalke handed over £2.3million for him.

In his first season at the German club he made limited headway and was restricted to a handful of starts. But he was to prove an altogether different proposition when farmed out for a 12-month loan spell at newly promoted Kaiserslautern, where head coach Marco Kurz was considerably more patient with him than Schalke boss Felix Magath.

> "He's got serious potential"
> Kaiserslautern's Marco Kurz

Week in, week out, Kurz insisted on playing him and the youngster was one of Lautern's best performers last season, helping them to finish the season in an excellent seventh place.

"Jan has made some big strides in his time here," says Kurz. "He's obviously a young man with serious potential and has demonstrated both fine playing ability and an eagerness to learn.

"He's not the finished article, of course. He has to be more cheeky and outgoing, be physically tougher in the challenge and go for goal more. The equaliser he scored in the last minute to give us a draw with Dortmund [a chest-trap followed by a volley into the top corner] shows what great things he's capable of."

Now back at Schalke, his challenge is a straightforward one: to keep up the good work.

Nick Bidwell

FIVE TO FOLLOW
EURO UNDER-21 STARS

Adrian

Age 23 (08.01.88) **Position** Forward
Spain/Deportivo La Coruna

The competition's top scorer with five goals and a worthy winner of the Golden Boot. Always on the move, with icy nerves in front of goal, a product of the youth system at Real Oviedo, he joined Depor at the age of 18.

Birkir BJARNASON

Age 23 (27.05.88) **Position** Midfielder
Iceland/Viking (Nor)

After two impressive displays as a substitute, coach Eyjolfur Sverrisson started him in the final group game against Denmark, where he repaid that faith with an assist and a headed goal in his side's 3-1 win.

Nicolai BOILESEN

Age 19 (16.02.92) **Position** Defender
Denmark/Ajax (Hol)

Few of the under-par Danes lived up to their tag of the "The Chosen Ones". An honourable exception, however, was the left-back, whose composure and elegance shone out for all to see. Equally at home in central defence.

Yann SOMMER

Age 22 (17.12.88) **Position** Goalkeeper
Switzerland/Basle

Despite being caught out by Thiago's stunning 40-yard free-kick in the Final, Switzerland's captain should nevertheless be proud of his overall contribution in Denmark, where he was responsible to a large degree for his side's wonderful defensive record of only two goals conceded in five games.

Andrei VORONKOV

Age 22 (08.02.88) **Position** Forward
Belarus/Dynamo Kyiv (Ukr)

Tall, intelligent and unflinching striker whose desire to make a splash was evident from first to last. And how he succeeded, supplying half of Belarus' total goal tally (two out of four) as his side swept to a surprising third place. Already a full international.

Edwin CARDONA

COUNTRY	Colombia
CLUB	Atletico Nacional
POSITION	Midfielder
AGE	18 (08.12.92)
LINKED WITH	Real Zaragoza (Spa), Sporting Lisbon (Por)

The goalscoring success of Colombia's Radamel Falcao in Europe with Porto has started a fierce debate back in his homeland as to why the national team is unable to get the best out of him.

While some argue that Colombia should adopt a more direct style like that of the Portuguese champions, former coach Francisco Maturana is not convinced. The man who put the country on the map in the 1980s and 1990s argues that "for us to try to play like Porto is risky, and even vacuous, because we have to play like Colombia".

> Cardona made a huge impression in the 2009 South American Under-17 Championship and drew comparisons with Juan Roman Riquelme

Central to this conception of the country's footballing identity is the inclusion of the midfield playmaker, the old-fashioned, foot-on-the-ball figure; a relic of the role played by Argentinians in the formative years of the Colombian game. And because of this there was only one name on everyone's lips after the 2009 South American Under-17 Championship in Chile.

Languidly elegant, strong in possession, deceptively well balanced and capable of opening up defences with lovely slide passes, Cardona made a huge impression in the tournament and drew comparisons with Argentina's talismanic Juan Roman Riquelme. He finished top scorer with seven goals in seven games and helped his country reach the finals of the Under-17 World Cup.

But it has not all been plain sailing for Cardona. Plunged into Atletico Nacional's first team at the age of 16, his club performances have lacked consistency and he has frequently been left on the bench. And, after missing the Under-17 World Cup in 2009 through injury, he was an immense disappointment in the South American Under-20 Championship in Peru at the start of this year, when he was seen by some as selfish and unproductive.

As hosts of the Under-20 World Cup at the end of July, Colombia will be keen to do well on home soil and they warmed up by winning the annual Toulon youth tournament in June – during which Cardona once again caught the eye with his prompting and finishing.

Colombia can but hope that their playmaker displays that sort of form throughout the forthcoming World Youth Cup.

Tim Vickery

Sweden

Behind the times

The Allsvenskan is one of Europe's most open top-flight championships, but it's not without its problems. **Nick Bidwell reports**

With nine different champions in the last dozen years, the Allsvenskan is a league brimming over with unpredictability. And although attendances in the Swedish top flight are rather on the low side – average gates this season are less than 8,000 – and several of the league's fixtures are undoubtedly sedate affairs, the atmosphere generated at certain games can at times be spine-tingling, especially when it's the Stockholm derby between AIK and Djurgarden, or the southern Skane duel featuring Malmo and Helsingborg. Loud, passionate and colourful, such spectacles are very much to Swedish football's credit and remain proof that the working-class fan has not been priced out of the game everywhere.

The Swedes must be doing something right as there are half a million adult and youth players involved in 3,200 active clubs throughout the country, not to mention they have a national team that has only missed three of the last 11 World

BRIEFING

Action stations...Teteh Bangura of AIK shields the ball from Kalmar's Tobias Carlsson

FORMAT

Since two additional clubs were added to the top division in 2008, the Allsvenskan has featured 16 teams who play each other home and away in a competition, which this year stretches from April to October.

At the end of the campaign, the bottom two sides are relegated to the second tier (Superettan), whose top two teams are promoted.

The side finishing 14th in the Allsvenskan takes part in a relegation/promotion play-off against the side finishing third in the Superettan.

The winners of the Allsvenskan enter the following season's Champions League at the second qualifying stage, while the runners-up and the third-placed team compete in the Europa League, along with the Swedish Cup winners.

MEDIA

Although there are no dedicated sports dailies

Derby day...fans and players of AIK and Djurgarden get ready for the big Stockholm clash

in Sweden, coverage in national tabloids such as *Aftonbladet* and *Expressen* – and leading regional papers *Dagens Nyheter* in Stockholm, *Goteborgs-Posten* and Malmo's *Sydsvenskan* – is invariably well-informed, in-depth and usually not afraid to pull its punches.

The country's standout football magazine is the Gothenburg-based *Offside*, which only comes out six times a year.

All of the publications mentioned run their own websites, as does the Swedish federation, who provides an excellent one-stop shop - with parts in English - at www.svenskfotboll.se

TELEVISION

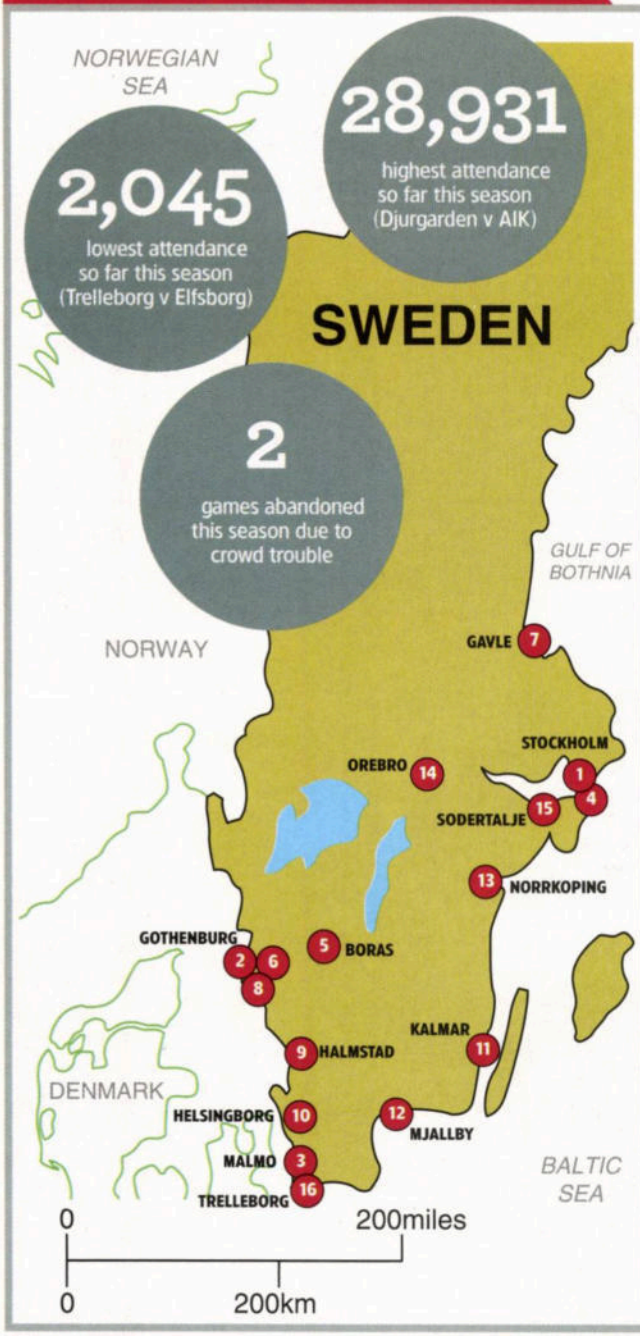
The TV rights for the Allsvenskan belong to Swiss corporation Kentaro, who have a licence agreement with subscription channel Canal Plus.

Apart from domestic league matches, Canal Plus also broadcast Serie A, La Liga, MLS, Argentinian league games and the English League Cup.

Terrestrial station TV4 also shows a number of Allsvenskan matches.

TV4 Sport is also free-to-air and specialises in the Superettan, English Championship and Europa League, as well as women's football.

Champion...former Malmo coach Roland Nilsson



THE BIG THREE...

1 AIK

Although sometimes referred to as AIK Stockholm, and just a 10-minute metro ride from the capital's city centre, the club actually comes from the nearby town of Solna. Initially formed in 1891 as a general sports club, a football section was added five years later and 10 national league titles have been won since, the last coming in 2009. Patronised by the King of Sweden, they are one of the country's best supported clubs.

Stockholm base...AIK's Rasunda Stadium

2 GOTHENBURG

Cemented their place in the national history books by twice winning the UEFA Cup, in 1982 and 1987. Their first European triumph was the handiwork of young coach Sven Goran Eriksson, who succeeded in turning a group of part-timers into a tactically intelligent, cohesive team of counter-attackers. The blue-and-white striped "Angels" have been in the Allsvenskan since 1977 – the longest top-flight tenancy of any club.

Shared...the Gamla Ullevi in Gothenburg

3 MALMO

The only Swedish side to reach a European Champions Cup Final, in 1979, when they were meticulously drilled by English coach Bob Houghton but lost 1-0 to Nottingham Forest in Munich. An outfit with solid working-class roots, they are known for their multicultural personnel: Zlatan Ibrahimovic began his career here, and from their ranks also emerged the first black player Jean-Paul Vonderburg) and the first Muslim (Yksel Osmanovski) to play for Sweden. The reigning Allsvenskan champions are currently the best-supported team with an average attendance of just under 16,000.

Champion...Malmo's Swedbank Stadion

All-out Allsvenskan...Norrkoping's Bobbie Friberg da Cruz (in white) tries to halt Hacken's Josef Karlsson

Cups and European Championships.

There is, however, a big problem casting its shadow over the domestic game: hooliganism. In the opening 10 weeks of this season, Djurgarden's general manager quit following death threats, the Syrianska-AIK game was abandoned after a linesman was struck by a firework thrown from the crowd, and another game was called off when Helsingborg goalkeeper Par Hansson was attacked by an 18-year-old Malmo fan.

A debate on how to combat such thuggery inevitably followed, but while all the usual solutions were suggested – CCTV, banning orders, personalised tickets and the removal of terracing – it was also patently clear that both the government and the football authorities were in buck-passing mode, with sports and

...AND THE REST

4

DJURGARDEN

From the wealthy Ostermalm district of central Stockholm, the seven-times champions are a national institution with their quaint Olympiastadion home, an ivy-clad affair which is part-castle, part-cloister and part-sports ground. Made a radical move early in the millennium by using an affiliated investment company to buy players.

5

ELFSBORG

Based in the textile town of Boras, gates of 10,000 mean that one in six locals heads to the Arena to see the 2006 champions.

6

GAIS

Formed in 1897, the Gothenburg-based club were a founding member of the Allsvenskan and were the first champions of the new league in 1925. Three more national titles followed, but since the mid-1950s the *Gronsvart* (green and black) have been the archetypal yo-yo

Popular...Elfsborg's Boras Arena

club, although they are now in the elite division for a sixth successive year.

7

GEFLE

From the eastern port of Gavle - Gefle is the old spelling of the town's name – they were Swedish Cup runners-up in 2006 and have twice appeared in European competition in the past five years.

8

HACKEN

The Gothenburg side were in the fifth division as recently as the early 1970s, making their Allsvenskan bow in 1982. Rejoined the top flight in 2008.

9

HALMSTAD

No wonder English coach Roy Hodgson is still celebrated here - to the point where he has a corner of the ground dedicated to him. It was under his shrewd leadership that the south-western club came of age some three-and-a-half decades ago, making light of a shoestring budget to win the championship in 1976 and 1979. The club won further titles in 1997 and 2000.

10

HELSINGBORG

Six-times winners of the Allsvenskan, the last coming in 1999, the southerners main claim to fame is as the club of Henrik Larsson, who was born in the town and played there in two separate spells. The Reds' most memorable moment was eliminating Internazionale in a Champions League qualifier in August 2000.

11

KALMAR

Since promotion in 2004, the "Red Brothers" have repeatedly confounded the critics who thought they had neither the playing quality nor the financial means to survive in the top division. Intelligent coaching and transfer market dealings - particularly relating to a raft of strong Brazilian buys - have made the Baltic coast outfit very competitive, and in 2008 they claimed their first national league title. Moved into the new Guldfageln Arena this season.

South...Helsingborg's Olimpia Stadium

12

MJALLBY

Promoted last season, the club from the southern fishing port finished the campaign in a totally unexpected sixth place with their stylish, attacking play.

13

NORRKOPING

The dominant force in Swedish football between 1943 and 1963, winning 11 league titles and featuring talents such as schemer Nils Liedholm and striker Gunnar Nordahl, who both went on to bigger and better things with Milan.

14

OREBRO

From a town renowned for shoe manufacturing, the club have been around for 103 years. In 2004 they suffered the heartache of having their top-flight licence withdrawn on economic grounds.

15

SYRIANSKA

Currently enjoying their first-ever season in the Allsvenskan, they were playing in the fourth tier of the national pyramid as recently as 2005. Formed as club for Aramean (Syriac) immigrants in 1977.

16

TRELLEBORG

The most southern club in the country used to be known for their rather one-dimensional long-ball game. Their glory days were in the 1990s, finishing third in the Allsvenskan in 1992 and knocking Blackburn Rovers out of the UEFA Cup in 1994-95.

culture minister Lena Adelsohn Liljeroth demanding that the Swedish Football Association take a more active role, while federation chief Lars-Ake Lagrell insisted that a state show of force was the answer.

"Football is not capable of taking care of the criminal elements on its own," said Lagrell. "We are urging the government to act. The politicians need to help us with tougher legislation. They have got to act before someone dies at a football stadium."

Clearly someone has to grasp the nettle - and fast. According to a survey carried out last year by the TV4 television channel, a fifth of Allsvenskan players, one in three club officials and half of the game's referees claim to have been threatened or harassed by supporters.

Now in its 87th year, the Allsvenskan

Violence...Helsingborg keeper Par Hansson was attacked by a Malmo fan who ran on to the pitch

has other problems, too. Over the past decade or so, top-flight standards have been steadily sliding, and for confirmation one only has to look at the recent results of Swedish sides in Europe. Last season no one was involved in continental competition by September and the country has not had a Champions League group-stage participant since Helsingborg in 2000-01.

When Gothenburg won the UEFA Cup in 1982 and 1987, and Malmo reached the Final of the 1979 European Cup, both consisted solely of amateurs who made up for a lack of training-ground hours with tactical discipline and continuity of personnel. But with most players now professional, Swedish teams no longer pass muster. The reason, of course, lies with the economics of globalisation. While

clubs in the major European leagues have feasted royally in the past 15 years on ever-larger amounts of TV and commercial cash, smaller leagues like Sweden's have moved to the margins, confronted by what must seem to be an unbridgeable gap. Europa League holders Porto make more money in a year than all 16 Allsvenskan teams put together, and Gothenburg – the nation's most successful club with 18 domestic titles – have the same annual revenue of £10million as they did in 1994.

Given the limited financial resources and belated espousal of professionalism – it was only declared in 1967, and even then it took three decades to be widely adopted – it's not surprising Sweden's best players have always beaten a path to the border, and this is accentuated today by the nation's high tax rates.

Problems...AIK keeper Tomi Maanoja evades flares thrown from the terraces

Some commentators, such as former Gothenburg keeper Thomas Wernersson, believe a reduction in top-flight numbers from 16 to 10 or 12 may be beneficial, arguing that a more concentrated elite would increase competition and result in better gates as the bigger clubs meet more frequently. But don't hold your breath for the innovators to triumph. The Allsvenkan minnows are highly unlikely to be the turkeys who vote for Christmas in what is a conservative football nation.

The game-changing Bosman ruling, which in 1995 introduced player freedom of movement, only hit the Swedish statute book a decade later at FIFA's behest, and though the Swedish Sports Confederation decided in 1999 to allow clubs to form public limited companies – with the proviso that external owners do not possess more than 50 per cent of the shareholding – since then just two top-flight sides, AIK and Djurgarden, have gone down that route. The concept of the football club as a voluntary, non-profit organisation still holds sway. **WS**

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

THE POLITICIANS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Lena Adelsohn LILJEROTH
Culture and sports minister for the past five years. A journalist by trade, she appeared in a state of undress in a charity calendar.

Lars-Ake LAGRELL
President of the Swedish Football Association (SvFF) since 1991 and recently re-elected for another term in office.

Susanne ERLANDSSON
SvFF vice-president, a rare female in a position of authority in the European game. Vice-chair of UEFA's Women's Football Committee.

Lars-Christer OLSSON
UEFA general secretary from 2003 to 2007. Since then a consultant to Malmo and widely tipped to take over from Lagrell at the SvFF.

THE NATIONAL COACH

Erik HAMREN
Has proved a steady hand on the tiller since taking over from Lars Lagerback in the autumn of 2010. Previously called the shots at Swedish clubs AIK and Orgryte, Aalborg in Denmark, and Rosenborg, who he led to successive Norwegian league titles in 2009 and 2010.

THE NATIONAL CAPTAIN

Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC
Sweden's only player of world-class calibre, and an individual with a surfeit of confidence and charisma, he is the obvious choice to wear the armband. He has his detractors, but force of personality and extravagant ability are worth their weight in gold.

Hakan JEPPSSON
Highly ambitious Malmo chairman. Ex-table tennis pro who took an economics degree and went on to become CEO of Inwido, a leading manufacturer of windows and doors.

Magnus ERLINGMARK
Gothenburg and Sweden defender turned general secretary of the national players' union (SFS). Put his name to an SFS open letter decrying the hooligan problem.

Hakan MILD
Midfielder in the Sweden team which came third at the 1994 World Cup, now director of sport at Gothenburg, with whom he won four Allsvenskan titles in the 1990s.

Johan STROMBERG
Making sure AIK prospers as a plc is the raison d'etre of the man who has been the Solna club's chairman since 2010. A lawyer by profession, he is the CEO of law firm Nordia.

THE POWER-BROKERS

GOTHENBURG AND STOCKHOLM

WHEN August 2011 **WHY?** Football in the summer

GAIS v HALMSTAD
August 1, 2011
GOTHENBURG v AIK
August 7, 2011
DJURGARDEN v GAIS
August 7, 2011
DJURGARDEN v OREBRO
August 14, 2011
GAIS v KALMAR
August 14, 2011
GOTHENBURG v GEFLE
August 21, 2011
HACKEN v DJURGARDEN
August 21, 2011
AIK v TRELLEBORG
August 21, 2011
GAIS v GOTHENBURG
August 28, 2011
AIK v HACKEN
August 28, 2011

Gothenburg landmark... but the Gamla Ullevi has been criticised for its lack of atmosphere

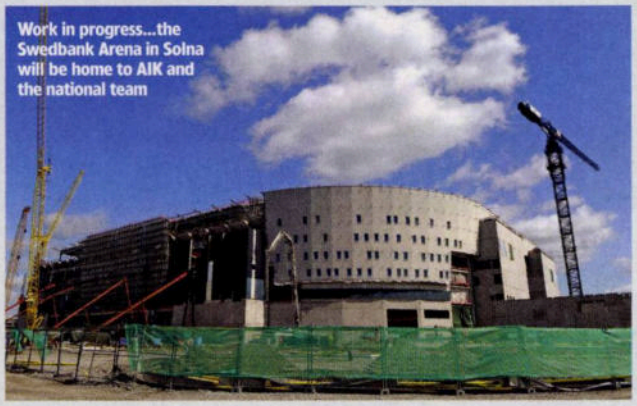
With three top-flight teams in Gothenburg and two in Stockholm there's plenty of scope for big-city rivalry in the Allsvenskan.

The most successful outfit of modern times, and title-winners in 2007, **Gothenburg** share the Gamla Ullevi ground with city rivals **GAIS**. Built on the site of the original ground of the same name that stood here for nearly a century, the Gamla Ullevi was unveiled in 2009 in time for that year's European Under-21 Championship. Holding nearly 19,000, including 3,400 standing fans, it is modest in size and tends to lack atmosphere, which makes it something of a target for much local criticism.

The cheapest tickets at the Gamla Ullevi are the standing ones for £11.50-£13.50, while seats cost £14-£19, with derby games around £9.50 dearer. Tickets can be purchased from club websites www.gais.se and www.ifkgoteborg.se or the ticket office (+46 31 811 020) of the Scandinavium arena, near the Gamla Ullevi. The stadium is a short walk from Central Station.

Gothenburg's third top-flight club, Hacken, play at the 7,000-capacity Rambergsvallen stadium. Tickets are £13.50 to sit, £9.50 for standing, and are available on line from www.ticnet.se. Rambergsvallen has its own stop on the city tram network.

In Stockholm, AIK currently play at the Rasunda (www.ticnet.se for ticket details) which is at Solna centrum on the city's blue metro line. The club are currently waiting for the Rasunda to be knocked down to make way for the new Swedbank Arena.


Work in progress...the Swedbank Arena in Solna will be home to AIK and the national team

Djurgarden are based in Ostermalm, in the capital's suburbs, and play at the 14,000-capacity Olympic Stadium, which is on the city's red metro line.

Peterjon Cresswell

Keir Radnedge

THE INSIDER

The expert view on events off the pitch

The Jack and Sepp show

FIFA president's complacency allowed Warner to flourish in CONCACAF

Storm brewing...Warner (left) and Blatter flank then Nigerian vice-president Goodluck Jonathan at the Under-17 World Cup in 2009

Jack Warner's abrupt departure from all football while under investigation over the presidential votes scandal will doubtless have been greeted by a sigh of relief from Sepp Blatter and any number of high-flying members of the FIFA family.

Warner had skipped blithely from one scandal to another, apparently untouchable. It mattered not whether the issue was World Cup ticket sales – to the benefit of his family's travel company, Simpaul Travel – or appearing to offer voting pledges in several directions simultaneously.

No one could have remained blind to the fact that when FIFA's national associations voted, at the 2006 Congress in Munich, to set up an ethics committee it was with the express insistence that its powers were not retrospective.

Two plus two down the years has added up to the conclusion that Blatter was content to leave Warner free to operate in whatever fashion he chose within his own CONCACAF fiefdom – so long as he delivered all 30-plus votes for the FIFA president whenever they might be needed.

To this extent, if no other, Blatter was complacent in fulfilling his responsibilities as president of the world federation. He kept a light hand on the tiller – to follow his own nautical allusions at the recent Zurich Congress – and allowed FIFA to lurch into some of the murkiest waters in its history. (Argentina's maintenance of its grip on the 1978 World Cup hosting remains an issue of intrigue – as FIFA's own centenary history records.)

Warner walked away from formal involvement with football on all levels, including his FIFA vice-presidency and CONCACAF presidency, four weeks after being suspended provisionally following allegations of bribery collusion with Mohamed Bin Hammam. Both had denied allegations of having offered $40,000 bribes to the 25 members of the Caribbean Football Union to vote for the Qatari and not for Blatter in the presidential election on June 1.

Bin Hammam, the Asian confederation president who is also under provisional suspension, may or may not benefit from Warner's vanishing act. Warner would have been a material witness when the ethics committee reconvenes to study all the evidence. He cannot now be forced to appear, which may leave Bin Hammam further out on a limb.

FIFA's bland statement concerning Warner's exit said: "Mr Warner is leaving FIFA by his own volition after nearly 30 years of service, having chosen to focus on his important work on behalf of the people and government of Trinidad & Tobago as a cabinet minister and chairman of the United National Congress, the major party in his country's coalition government.

"FIFA regrets the turn of events that have led to Mr Warner's decision.

"His resignation has been accepted by world football's governing body, and his contribution to international football and to Caribbean football in particular and the CONCACAF confederation are appreciated and acknowledged."

This may appear a polite way of saying "good riddance" but the fact of the matter is that Warner's energy, with the support of general secretary Chuck Blazer – since turned whistle-blower – raised CONCACAF from a zero in world football politics into a powerful political force. He also played a decisive role in bringing age-group world championships to the region and significant FIFA development funds.

In the end, however, Warner overreached himself. He tried playing off both ends against the middle once too often and ended with his regional football credibility, and Trinidadian political status, under serious attack for just about the first time.

Warner is Minister of Works back home and opposition politicians seized on the FIFA scandal to demand his resignation. The simple way to put an end to a gathering and potential dangerous political storm was to kill the FIFA scandal stone dead by quitting football altogether.

> "I've been hung out to dry continually and I'm not prepared to take that"
> **Jack Warner**

But this is not the whole story and no one near the heart of power pretends that it is. In the run-up to FIFA Congress, Warner had responded to the ethics committee action by promising a "football tsunami" – which was easily deflected by Blatter (over a CONCACF development cash issue) and only damaged secretary general Jerome Valcke, whose wildly injudicious email to Warner claimed in an unsupported aside that Qatar had "bought" the 2022 World Cup vote.

Warner then threatened to reveal

damaging Blatter emails, but failed to follow through. Was he bluffing? Was he negotiating? Was he keeping his powder dry for a further assault which would cost him little but could shred the little remaining credibility possessed of FIFA's leadership?

While Warner remained within the FIFA family, in the golden shackles of an ExCo member's five-star lifestyle, even he was inhibited from telling tales. Now, on the outside, there is nothing to stop him, save episodes which might damage his own domestic political standing. As it stands, Warner has turned from self-made magnet for controversy into a potential time bomb.

In the immediate aftermath of his exit, Warner was relatively restrained. He said: "Had we announced [at the CONCACAF congress] in Miami the confederation's support for Blatter all this would never have happened. The general secretary that I had employed, who worked with me for 21 years, with the assistance of elements of FIFA, has sought to undermine me in ways that are unimaginable."

He said gifts and favours were commonplace around FIFA and therefore "what's happening now for me is hypocrisy. I've been hung out to dry continually and I'm not prepared to take that".

Warner may have done a lot for CONCACAF – up to a point and at a desperate price – but he also left the confederation in a political shambles which made all the wrong sort of headlines while its flagship Gold Cup was being played out in the United States.

Here lies a further fascination. No one has ever quite understood why the United States Soccer Federation accepted Warner's controversy-ridden leadership of CONCACAF. Were they just waiting for the moment when overconfidence would lead him to overreach himself? Were they nervous of the international reaction to the sight of American football trying to throw its foreign policy weight around?

Warner may have gone but he has left a raft of unanswered questions in his wake...and, anyway, football may not have heard the last of him. In the meantime, FIFA insists: "As a consequence of Mr Warner's self-determined resignation, all ethics committee procedures against him have been closed and the presumption of innocence is maintained."

So that's all right, then. WS

Wrong tune...Blatter's belief that operatic tenor Placido Domingo would suit FIFA's "solutions committee" is misguided

Does Platini really want to be FIFA boss?

Michel Platini is the official favourite to step into Sepp Blatter's shoes if the happily re-elected president really does step down in 2015, as per his promise which secured most of Europe's votes in congress.

But Platini has never made a secret of his preference for a home life in France rather than in Switzerland, even during his tenure of UEFA over the last four-and-a-half years. In any event, neither he nor anyone else would mimic Blatter's 24/7 management style.

One of the failures of Blatter's 13 years in power has been his inability to bring serious fresh faces to the upper echelons. When Jordan's Prince Ali formally took on the Asia FIFA vice-presidency he was less than half the age of almost every other ExCo member.

The so-called "solutions committee" – Blatter's haplessly ill-chosen label – might consider not only cutting all ExCo members' service to a maximum of three terms but might also consider an upper age limit. Even 70, in this day and age, would be generous.

Any prospect of this committee coming up with something meaningful and credible has been undermined, not merely by the title, but by Blatter's belief that long-retired American politician Henry Kissinger, Dutch football legend Johan Cruyff and operatic superstar Placido Domingo would be ideal members.

Most surprising of all is that Blatter – as an honorary member of AIPS, the international sports journalists' association – has not seen the light.

Who, after all, monitors FIFA's failings and comes up with proposals for greater accountability and transparency more than the worldwide media?

Chaos theory alive and well

Football's own devotion to the "chaos theory" is as evident as ever thanks to Joao Havelange, Worawi Makudi, Fernand Duchaussoy and Julio Grondona:

- Havelange, 95-year-old honorary president of FIFA, is being investigated by the International Olympic Committee – of which he remains a member – over allegations (denied) that he accepted an illicit payment of $1 million in 1997 from collapsed marketing agent ISL.
- Makudi has been re-elected as president of the Thailand FA for a third term after being cleared – ironically, by an English FA report – of allegations by Lord Triesman that he had demanded TV rights for the (later scrapped) friendly between Thailand and England in return for his 2018 World Cup vote.
- Duchaussoy was ousted as French federation president by Noel Le Graet after only 10 months for failing to resolve, as quickly as possible, the fallout from France's 2010 World Cup flop (including the sacking of coach Raymond Domenech and the row over player bonuses).
- Grondona is football president of Argentina, who are under investigation by FIFA after a 4-1 friendly defeat by Nigeria – on the very day the self-righteous Grondona was blasting away at England during FIFA Congress.

6 of the best

Libertadores stars

Tim Vickery selects the outstanding performers from South America's leading club competition

1 Neymar

SANTOS (BRA)

AGE
19 (05.02.92)
POSITION
Forward

The 52nd Libertadores Cup was Neymar's campaign, the moment when the brilliant, petulant boy prince of Brazilian football became an international star, taking the first steps out of his comfort zone as he was forced to deal with refereeing very different to what he is used to.

In this aspect, Neymar is the fruit of the poisoned tree. Frail and dazzlingly skilful, he is an obvious target for defenders. Having grown up in an environment where diving is tolerated and profitable, he goes to ground in a way that is frequently not only an attempt to con the referee but comes across as a plea for marks for artistic interpretation.

A feature of his young career, though, is his capacity to learn from experience. During the course of the Libertadores he seemed to understand that he would not be awarded so many cheap free-kicks. But if he cut the diving down, he did not cut it out. His antics still cost him a booking - and some warnings - in the first leg of the Final.

Neymar, then, is still a work in progress. But he is making progress, and the quality of his work gives rise to hopes that he could grow into a genuine sensation of the global game.

His ball control is flawless, he can glide past his marker on either side and he has a graceful burst of acceleration, while his finishing off either foot is uncommonly calm and precise.

Hysterically touted at the time, Robinho has fallen short of the expectations surrounding him when he moved to Europe six years ago. Neymar is a better prospect, but he will have to confront similar challenges as he moves towards the greatness which is in his grasp. His temperament will be tested, but his talent is undeniable.

2 Juan Manuel Martinez

VELEZ SARSFIELD (ARG)

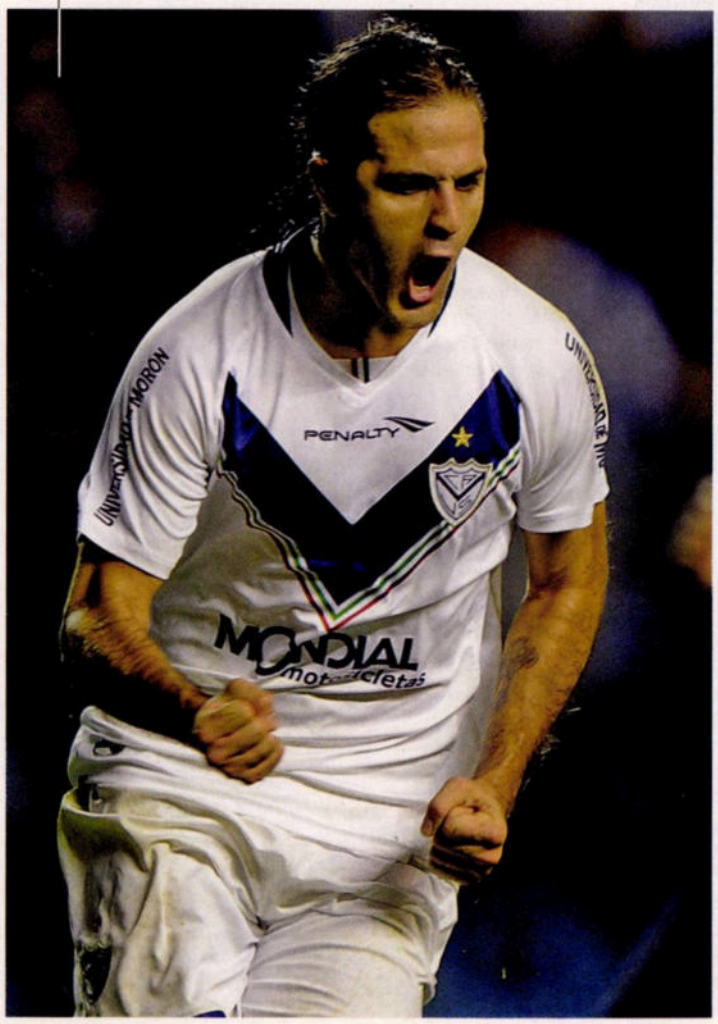
AGE
25 (25.10.85)
POSITION
Forward

The support striker is one of a number of Argentinian players who have found that their careers pick up momentum after a move elsewhere in South America.

Yet another product of Velez Sarsfield's impressive youth system he was struggling to get a game in the first team before a loan move to Cucuta in Colombia gave his career a kick-start. He was a key component for the 2007 shock Libertadores Cup semi-finalists and – with his name established after another loan spell, this time with Al Shabab in Saudi Arabia – he was ready to return to Velez in 2008 and start making a decisive contribution.

The strength of his tight dribbling has given him the nickname *Burrito* (the little donkey), a tribute to a style of play similar to Ariel Ortega. Able to thread his way to the byline on either side, he can cut inside and finish off his left or right foot. After winning a penalty against Portugal on his Argentina debut in February he was unlucky to be left out of the Copa America squad.

He was also unfortunate not to be taking part in this year's Libertadores Final. In the second leg of the semi-final against Penarol he had a goal wrongly ruled out for offside and won the penalty that was missed by Santiago Silva. Had one of those counted Velez, and not Penarol, would have met Santos in the Final.



3 Ivan Piris

CERRO PORTENO (PAR)

AGE
22 (10.03.89)
POSITION
Defender

During the course of the Libertadores, Cerro Porteno coach Leonardo Astrada came to the conclusion that he had the best right-back in South America and, even if the 22-year-old's lack of height was occasionally a problem when defending at the far post, Piris was highly impressive in everything he did.

His pace, balance and speed on the turn were all highlighted in duels with Neymar of Santos, but he was at his most eye-catching pushing forward. He developed an excellent relationship with Cerro playmaker Jonathan Fabbro, who would switch the play by passing the ball into space for the right-back to run on to. Piris took full advantage of such service, curling in some classy crosses, providing intelligent passes and, against Colo Colo, crashing in a superb goal when his side seemed to be on the brink of first-round elimination.

However, the Paraguayan club's run to the semi-finals will in all probability hasten the departure of their promising defender, with a number of European clubs adding his name to their pre-season shopping list.

4 Lucas Pratto

UNIVERSIDAD CATOLICA (CHL)

AGE
23 (04.06.88)
POSITION
Forward

A big centre-forward wearing the number two shirt is surprising enough, but then the career of this Argentinian from La Plata is full of the unexpected. He came though the youth ranks at Boca Juniors, but with few first-team opportunities he was loaned out to Tigre and Union Santa Fe, even having a spell in Norway with Oslo-based club Lyn.

His next loan move took him to Chile's Universidad Catolica as part of the deal that saw Gary Medel go the other way. With four goals in 17 games, he played his part in Catolica's domestic title last year, but no one could have foreseen the impact he would make in the Libertadores. Strong but quick enough to play up front on his own, the burly striker looked the complete package, scoring six times as well as setting up team-mates with his strength on the ball and vision.

After proving his worth in Catolica's run to the quarter-finals, they exercised their option to sign him... and then immediately sold him on – at a considerable profit – to Genoa of Italy.

5 Alejandro Martinuccio

PENAROL (URU)

AGE
23 (16.12.87)
POSITION
Forward

Although well shackled by Adriano in the Final, nobody did more than the Argentinian to ensure Penarol made it there for the first time since 1987.

In recent years the football played by this historic club has often been painfully slow, the line-up full of veterans returning from Europe. As the Libertadores got underway a repeat performance seemed likely – until Martinuccio replaced 35-year-old Tony Pacheco and gave a kick start to the campaign.

The nippy left-footer added much needed pace and thrust to the counter-attack as he shone in the space behind big centre-forward Juan Manuel Olivera. Santos had seen enough to be worried and made stopping him the centre of their defensive plan.

However, stopping Martinuccio's career progress would seem to be harder. Having signed in 2009 from Nueva Chicago of the Argentina second division, there is now interest from Brazil and Italy, and the time to cash in has surely arrived.

6 DANILO

SANTOS (BRA)

AGE
19 (15.07.91)
POSITION
Midfielder

If it was fitting that Neymar's goal in the second leg of the Final opened up the path to victory, it is also appropriate that the winner came from Danilo. In his own less heralded way, the talented utility man is as much a symbol of the current team as the greatly hyped striker.

In recent years Santos have not only concentrated on producing their own players, they have also been on the look out for interesting youngsters coming through at other clubs, and Danilo is one such case, snapped up after catching the eye playing at right-back for America-MG.

At the start of this year he featured at right back for Brazil's Under-20s but, one of only three ever-presents in the Santos team, he spent most of the Libertadores campaign in the centre of midfield. Tall and powerful, athletic and two-footed, he looks at home wherever he plays.

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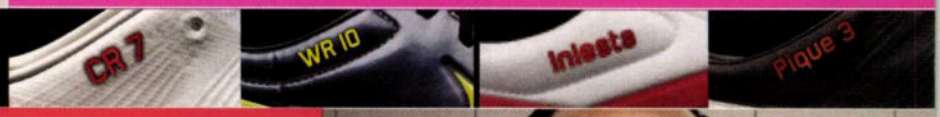

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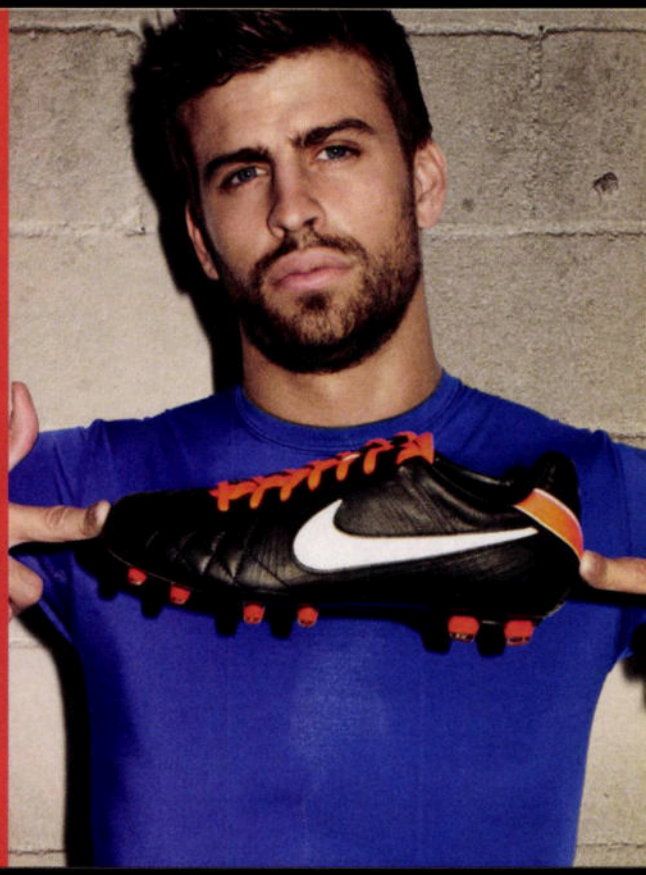

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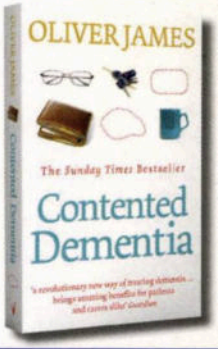

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No way through...Canada's Simeon Jackson takes on Guadeloupe in the Gold Cup

Contents

INTERNATIONALS

84 CONCACAF Gold Cup
85 Euro 2012 qualifiers
87 African Nations Cup qualifiers
88 Nations Cup
89 Kirin Cup
89 Friendlies
91 Friendly fixtures
91 Under-20 World Cup fixtures

PREVIEW

92 African Champions League

DIGEST

93 Austria
94 Bulgaria
95 Croatia
96 Czech Republic
97 Denmark
98 Poland
99 Serbia
100 Switzerland
101 Macedonia/Slovakia/Slovenia
102 European Under-21 Championship
104 South American leagues

CLUB RESULTS

106 ESM team of the month
107 UEFA Champions League
107 Europa League
107 European leagues
109 ESM Golden Shoe
111 Libertadores Cup
111 South American leagues
112 Central & North America
113 Africa
113 Asia

Swiss title...Basle's Franco Costanzo

Beaten...Argentina defeated

ARGENTINA

Suspicious late goal

FIFA are to investigate abnormal betting activity surrounding Argentina's 4-1 defeat by Nigeria.

Suspicions were raised when a 98th-minute consolation penalty, scored by Mauro Boselli, was preceded by unusual patterns in the markets.

The two sides are due to meet again, in Dhaka, Bangladesh on September 6. Four days prior to that, Sergio Batista's side will play Venezuela in Kolkata, India.

BANGLADESH

Foreigner number five

Former Macedonia coach Nikola Ilievski has become Bangladesh's fifth foreign boss in the last three years.

He replaces fellow Macedonian coach Gjore Jovanovski, whose contract was terminated before he had even started in the job for refusing to travel to Pakistan for the away leg of a World Cup qualifier.

BRAZIL

Ronaldo says goodbye

Ronaldo made a farewell international appearance, coming on for 15 minutes and replacing goalscorer Fred, in Brazil's 1-0 win against Romania.

The 34-year-old, who won 98 caps for his country, told the crowd in Sao Paolo: "Thanks to all of you for what you did in my career.

"When I cried, you cried with me. When I smiled, you smiled with me. See you soon, but on the sidelines this time. I'm very proud of being Brazilian."

Internationals

CONCACAF GOLD CUP FINALS

In the United States

Group A

June 5 - Arlington
Costa Rica 5 (Urena 6, 46, Saborio 41, Mora 47, Campbell 71)
Cuba 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 80,108. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Costa Rica: Navas - Diaz, Oviedo, Mora, Marshall, Acosta, Salvatierra, Borges, Saborio (Brenes 68), Urena (Campbell 56), Bolanos (J Martinez 68).
Cuba: O Molina - R Fernandez, Urgelles, Marquez, Y Colome, J Colome, Francisco, Hernandez (Mesa 78), Gomez (Quesada 74), Cervantes, Lahera (Linares 60).

June 5 - Arlington
Mexico 5 (Juarez 55, De Nigris 58, J Hernandez 59, 67, pen 90+5)
El Salvador 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 80,108. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
Mexico: G Ochoa - F Rodriguez, Salcido, Moreno, Guardado (Reyna 74), Torrado, I Castro (De Nigris 56), Barrera, Juarez, G Dos Santos (Marquez 69), J Hernandez.
El Salvador: Montes - Anaya, M Gonzalez, Turcios (Baires 60), Garcia, R Hernandez, D Alas, A Flores (Martin 67), J Alas, Quintanilla, Zelaya (Corrales 79). *Sent off: M Gonzalez 90+3min.*

June 9 - Charlotte
Costa Rica 1 (Brenes 90+5)
El Salvador 1 (Zelaya 45)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,530. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
Costa Rica: Navas - Diaz, Mora (Brenes 80), Marshall, Acosta, Salvatierra, Borges, Guevara, Saborio, Urena (Ruiz 46), Bolanos (Campbell 62).
El Salvador: Montes - Anaya, Turcios, Garcia, R Hernandez, D Alas, Baires (R Sanchez 46), A Flores (Martin 72), J Alas, Zelaya, Corrales (Quintanilla 62).

June 9 - Charlotte
Cuba 0
Mexico 5 (J Hernandez 36, 76, G Dos Santos 63, 68, De Nigris 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 46,012. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Cuba: O Molina - R Fernandez, Marquez, Dranguet, Y Colome (Quesada 73), J Colome, Francisco, Hernandez, Gomez, Cervantes (Urgelles 11), Linares (Lahera 70).
Mexico: Talavera - Marquez (Torres Nilo 72), Salcido, Moreno, Guardado (E Hernandez 66), Torrado, Barrera (De Nigris 64), Juarez, G Dos Santos, Reyna, J Hernandez.

June 12 - Chicago
El Salvador 6 (Zelaya 13, 71, Romero 29, Blanco 69, Alvarez 84, Quintanilla 90+4)
Cuba 1 (Marquez 83)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 62,000. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
El Salvador: Montes - Anaya, Turcios, Garcia, R Hernandez (Quintanilla 72), D Alas, Romero, A Flores (Alvarez 63), J Alas, Zelaya, Corrales (Blanco 68).
Cuba: Pichardo - R Fernandez, Urgelles, Marquez, Dranguet, Y Colome (Quesada 75), J Colome (Carrazana 52), Francisco, Hernandez, Gomez, Linares (Lahera 62).

June 12 - Chicago
Mexico 4 (Marquez 17, Guardado 19, 26, Barrera 38)
Costa Rica 1 (Urena 69)
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 62,000. **Ref:** Moreno (Pan)
Mexico: Talavera - Marquez (Torres Nilo 70), Salcido, Moreno, Guardado, Torrado, I Castro, Barrera (Reyna 61), Juarez, G Dos Santos, J Hernandez (De Nigris 83).
Costa Rica: Navas - Diaz (Madrigal 85), Mora (Duarte 46), Marshall, Acosta, Salvatierra, Borges, Guevara (Urena 46), Ruiz, Saborio, Bolanos.

GOLD CUP – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mexico	3	3	0	0	14	1	9
Costa Rica	3	1	1	1	7	5	4
El Salvador	3	1	1	1	7	7	4
Cuba	3	0	0	3	1	16	0

Group B

June 6 - Carson
Jamaica 4 (Shelton 21, R Johnson 39, Phillips 79, O Daley 84)
Grenada 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 6,500. **Ref:** Toledo (USA)
Jamaica: Ricketts - Thomas, Phillips, J Taylor, Dicoy Williams, Vernan, Austin (K Daley 69), Morrison, Richards (O Daley 65), Shelton (Watson 79), R Johnson.
Grenada: Louison - Johnson, A Modeste, Marshall, Cyrus, Rocastle (L Joseph 46), R Charles, S Rennie (B Bubb 62), P Modeste (S Phillip 88), Facey, Straker.

June 6 - Carson
Honduras 0
Guatemala 0
Att: 6,500. **Ref:** Chacon (Mex)
Honduras: N Valladares - O Garcia, Sabillon, Bernardez, O Chavez (Leveron 86), Beckeles, Delgado, Thomas (W Martinez 70), E Martinez, Costly, Bengtson (R Nunez 70).
Guatemala: Jerez - G Cabrera, Castrillo (Medina 71), Gallardo, Noriega, Contreras, Velasquez, Pappa (Figueroa 87), J Lopez, Ruiz, H Lopez (Arreola 46). *Sent off: G Cabrera 61min, Medina 79min.*

June 10 - Miami
Jamaica 2 (Phillips 65, 78)
Guatemala 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,057. **Ref:** Quesada (CR)
Jamaica: Ricketts - Thomas, Phillips, J Taylor, Dicoy Williams (A Reid 10), Vernan, Austin (Damian Williams 84), Morrison, Richards, Shelton, R Johnson (K Daley 63).
Guatemala: Jerez - Gallardo, Noriega, E Gonzalez (Figueroa 46; Castrillo 53), Vasquez, Contreras, Velasquez, Leon (Pappa 46), J Lopez, Ruiz, Isaula. *Sent off: Noriega 70min.*

June 10 - Miami
Grenada 1 (Murray 19)
Honduras 7 (Bengtson 26, 37, Costly 28, 67, 71, W Martinez 88, Mejia 90+3)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 18,057. **Ref:** Gantar (Can)
Grenada: Louison - Johnson (S Rennie 61), A Modeste, Langaigne, S Phillip, R Charles (Leo 46), Williams, L Joseph (Julien 80), Facey, Straker, Murray.
Honduras: N Valladares - O Garcia, Sabillon, J Garcia, Bernardez, O Chavez, Delgado, Thomas (W Martinez 46), E Martinez (R Nunez 64), Costly, Bengtson (Mejia 73).

June 13 - Harrison
Guatemala 4 (Del Aguila 16, Pappa 22, Ruiz 54, Gallardo 59)
Grenada 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Toledo (USA)
Guatemala: Jerez - G Cabrera, Medina, Gallardo, Velasquez, Pappa (Leon 89), Romero (Pezzarossi 84), J Lopez, Del Aguila, Ruiz, H Lopez (Arreola 46).
Grenada: Louison - Johnson, A Modeste, Marshall (S Phillip 65), R Charles, Williams (Cyrus 46), M Phillip, Facey (Julien 82), Straker, B Bubb, Murray.

June 13 - Harrison
Honduras 0
Jamaica 1 (R Johnson 36)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)
Honduras: N Valladares - O Garcia, Sabillon, J Garcia, Bernardez, O Chavez, Delgado (Portillo 76), Mejia, E Martinez (W Martinez 46), Costly (R Nunez 26), Bengtson.
Jamaica: Miller - Phillips, J Taylor, A Reid, O Daley (Vernan 85), K Daley, Morrison, Watson (Boyd 89), Damian Williams, Richards, R Johnson (Shelton 83).

GOLD CUP – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Jamaica	3	3	0	0	7	0	9
Honduras	3	1	1	1	7	2	4
Guatemala	3	1	1	1	4	2	4
Grenada	3	0	0	3	1	15	0

Group C

June 7 - Detroit
Panama 3 (B Perez 29, Tejada 32, Gomez pen 57)
Guadeloupe 2 (Jovial 65, 79)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 28,209. **Ref:** Mejia (ESv)
Panama: Penedo - Baloy, L Henriquez, Dasent, Machado (Cummings 82), Gomez, Barahona (Quintero 77), A Henriquez, Cooper, Tejada (Renteria 67), B Perez.
Guadeloupe: Grandel - Comminges, Lambourde, Tacalfred, Viator, Loval, Fleurival, Auvray (Racon 76), Collet (Gamiette 59), Gendrey (Jovial 47), Socrier. *Sent off: Tacalfred 38min.*

June 7 - Detroit
United States 2 (Altidore 15, Dempsey 62)
Canada 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 28,209. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
United States: Howard - Bocanegra, Goodson, Cherundolo, Ream, Dempsey, Jones (Edu 79), Bradley, Donovan, Altidore (Kljestan 74), Agudelo (Wondolowski 64).
Canada: Hirschfeld - McKenna, De Jong, Hainault, Johnson (Gerba 65), De Rosario (Friend 81), Hutchinson, Ledgerwood, Simpson, Dunfield (Beaulieu-Bourgault 82), Jackson.

June 11 - Tampa
Canada 1 (De Rosario pen 51)
Guadeloupe 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,731. **Ref:** Taylor (Bbs)
Canada: Borjan - McKenna, Hainault, Klukowski, Johnson, De Guzman (Pacheco 81), De Rosario (Jackson 63), Ledgerwood, Simpson, Dunfield, Gerba (Friend 64).
Guadeloupe: Grandel - Comminges, Lambourde, Zubar, Viator, Fleurival (Loval 58), Gamiette, Auvray, Racon (Ictoi 65), Socrier (Nabab 73), Jovial. *Sent off: Lambourde 4min.*

June 11 - Tampa
United States 1 (Goodson 66)
Panama 2 (Goodson og 19, Gomez pen 36)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 27,731. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
United States: Howard - Bocanegra, Goodson (Wondolowski 78), Cherundolo, Ream, Dempsey, Jones (Kljestan 60), Bradley, Donovan, Altidore, Agudelo (Bedoya 61).
Panama: Penedo - Baloy, L Henriquez, R Torres, Dasent, Gomez, Barahona (G Torres 70), A Henriquez, Cooper (Quintero 84), Tejada (Bonaga 81), B Perez.

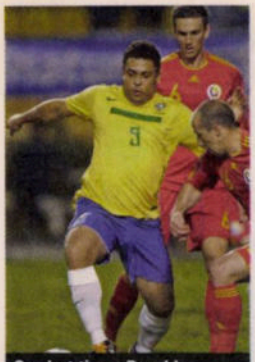
June 14 - Kansas City
Canada 1 (De Rosario pen 62)
Panama 1 (Tejada 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 20,109. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Canada: Borjan - McKenna, Hainault, Klukowski, Johnson (Pacheco 85), De Guzman, De Rosario, Ledgerwood, Simpson (Ricketts 73), Dunfield, Jackson.
Panama: Mejia - Baloy, L Henriquez, Dasent, Machado, Davis, G Gomez, Quintero (Cooper 67), Bonaga (Godoy 79), B Perez, Renteria (Tejada 71).

June 14 - Kansas City
Guadeloupe 0
United States 1 (Altidore 9)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 20,109. **Ref:** Solis (CR)
Guadeloupe: Grandel - Zubar, Tacalfred, Viator, Ictoi, Loval (Collet 26), Gamiette, Auvray, Racon (Gotin 73), Socrier, Nabab (Fautrai 60).
United States: Howard - Bocanegra, Goodson, Lichaj, Cherundolo, Dempsey, Jones, Bradley (Edu 85), Donovan, Wondolowski (Bedoya 64), Altidore (Kljestan 78).

GOLD CUP – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Panama	3	2	1	0	6	4	7
United States	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Canada	3	1	1	1	2	3	4
Guadeloupe	3	0	0	3	2	5	0

Top 2 in each group and the 2 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualified for quarter-finals


One last time...Ronaldo

BURKINA FASO

Complaint over player

Namibia launched an official complaint after they lost 4-1 to Burkina Faso in the African Nations Cup qualifiers, arguing that defender Herve Zengue of Russian club Terek Grozny was not eligible to play.

The Cameroon-born Zengue – who has a Burkinabe wife, which entitles him to citizenship – also played in the game between the two countries in March, which Burkina Faso won 4-0.

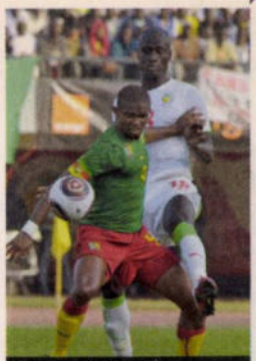
CAMEROON

Four dead after game

Four people were killed in clashes between supporters and police after Cameroon's goalless draw at home to Senegal left the four-times champions looking likely to miss out on next year's African Nations Cup finals.

Samuel Eto'o, who hit the crossbar from the penalty spot two minutes from time, said: "I'm responsible for the loss. I kindly beg for your excuse."

Cameroon will be eliminated if they fail to beat Mauritius in their next game and Congo DR beat Senegal.


Blamed...Eto'o (left)

Quarter-finals

June 18 - East Rutherford
Costa Rica 1 (Marshall 56)
Honduras 1 (Bengtson 49)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 78,807.
Ref: Moreno (Pan)
Honduras 4-2 on pens
Costa Rica: Navas - Diaz (Mora 46), Oviedo, Marshall, Acosta, Salvatierra, Borges, Ruiz, Saborio, Urena (Campbell 108), Bolanos (Madrigal 69).
Honduras: N Valladares - O Garcia, Sabillon, J Garcia, Bernardez, O Chavez, Espinoza (Costly 81), Portillo, Thomas (W Palacios 90+3), W Martinez (R Nunez 23), Bengtson.

June 18 - East Rutherford
Mexico 2 (De Nigris 48, J Hernandez 66)
Guatemala 1 (Ruiz 5)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 78,807. **Ref:** Campbell (Jam)
Mexico: Talavera - Marquez, Salcido, Moreno, Guardado, Torrado, I Castro (De Nigris 46), Barrera (Zavala 83), Juarez, G Dos Santos (Reyna 78), J Hernandez.
Guatemala: Jerez - G Cabrera, Gallardo, Noriega, Vasquez (Castrillo 71), Velasquez, Pappa, J Lopez, Del Aguila, Ruiz, Arreola (Isaula 70).

June 19 - Washington DC
Jamaica 0
United States 2 (J Taylor og 49, Dempsey 79)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 45,424. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Jamaica: Ricketts - Thomas, Phillips, J Taylor, Vernan (Watson 63), A Reid, Austin, Morrison (K Daley 68), Richards, Shelton (O Daley 73), R Johnson. *Sent off: J Taylor 67min.*
United States: Howard - Bocanegra, Goodson, Lichaj, Cherundolo, Dempsey, Jones (Edu 75), Bradley, Kljestan, Bedoya (Donovan 65), Altidore (Agudelo 12).

June 19 - Washington DC
Panama 1 (Tejada 90)
El Salvador 1 (Zelaya pen 78)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Att:** 45,424.
Ref: Quesada (CR)
Panama 5-3 on pens
Panama: Penedo - Baloy, L Henriquez (Renteria 85), R Torres, Machado, G Gomez (Godoy 80), Barahona, A Henriquez, Cooper (Quintero 80), Tejada, B Perez. *Sent off: B Perez 90+3min.*
El Salvador: Montes - Anaya, Purdy, Turcios, Garcia, Hernandez (Romero 46), D Alas, J Alas (A Flores 86), Quintanilla (Alvarez 68), Zelaya, Corrales. *Sent off: Anaya 90+3min.*

Semi-finals

June 22 - Houston
United States 1 (Dempsey 76)
Panama 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 70,627. **Ref:** Wijngaarde (Sur)
United States: Howard - Bocanegra, Goodson, Lichaj, Cherundolo, Dempsey, Jones, Bradley, Kljestan (Donovan 46), Bedoya, Agudelo (Adu 66).
Panama: Penedo - Baloy, L Henriquez, R Torres, Machado, G Gomez (Godoy 86), Barahona (G Torres 86), A Henriquez, Cooper (Renteria 71), Quintero, Tejada.

June 22 - Houston
Honduras 0
Mexico 2 (De Nigris 93, J Hernandez 99)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 0-0. **Att:** 70,627.
Ref: Lopez (Gtm)
Honduras: N Valladares - O Garcia, Sabillon, J Garcia, Bernardez (Leveron 46), O Chavez, Espinoza, Portillo (R Nunez 61), Thomas, Mejia, Bengtson (Costly 71). *Sent off: Espinoza 115min.*
Mexico: Talavera - Marquez, Salcido (Torres Nilo 56), Moreno, Guardado (De Nigris 53), Torrado, I Castro, Barrera (Aguilar 102), Juarez, G Dos Santos, J Hernandez.

Final

June 25 - Pasadena (Rose Bowl)
United States 2 (Bradley 8, Donovan 23)
Mexico 4 (Barrera 29, 50, Guardado 36, G Dos Santos 76)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 93,420. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)
United States: Howard - Bocanegra, Goodson, Lichaj, Cherundolo (Bornstein 11), Dempsey, Jones, Bradley, Bedoya (Agudelo 63), Donovan, Adu (Kljestan 86).
Mexico: Talavera - Marquez (Reynoso 43), Salcido (Torres Nilo 28), Moreno, Guardado, Torrado, I Castro, Barrera (Zavala 75), Juarez, G Dos Santos, J Hernandez.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

1991	United States
1993	Mexico
1996	Mexico
1998	Mexico
2000	Canada
2002	United States
2003	Mexico
2005	United States
2007	United States
2009	Mexico

2014 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

CONCACAF SECTION
Preliminary round

1st leg

June 15 - Couva, Trinidad
Montserrat 2 (Hodgson 44, 86)
Belize 5 (McCaulay 24, 75, 83, Roches 50, Kuylen 53)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 150. **Ref:** Willett (A&B)
Montserrat: Hilton - Wade (Bramble 77), Griffith, Allen, W Dyer, Roach, Hodgson, Mendes, Lee, A Dyer, O'Garro.
Belize: Moody-Orio - Mendez (Simpson 46), Eiley, Kuylen, Gaynair, Smith, McCaulay, Roches (Jimenez 82), Symms, E Trapp, Benavides (D Trapp 64).

The 2nd leg of the Montserrat v Belize tie, originally scheduled for June 19, was postponed after FIFA suspended the Belize federation because of 'severe governmental interference'

Other preliminary round ties:
Anguilla v Dominican Republic (July 8 & 10)
Aruba v St Lucia (July 8 & 12)
Turks & Caicos v Bahamas (July 2 & 9)
US Virgin Islands v British Virgin Islands (July 3 & 10)

Winners qualify for CONCACAF's 1st group stage, the draw for which will be made at the main World Cup qualifying draw on July 30 this year in Rio de Janeiro

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS

Group A

June 3 - Vienna
Austria 1 (A Friedrich og 50)
Germany 2 (Gomez 44, 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 47,500. **Ref:** Busacca (Swi)
Austria: Gratzei - Klein, Scharner, Pogatetz, Fuchs, Baumgartlinger, Kulovits, Dag (Junuzovic 66), Harnik (Royer 81), Alaba, Hoffer (Janko 88).
Germany: Neuer - Lahm, A Friedrich, Hummels, Schmelzer, Khedira (Badstuber 69), Kroos (Aogo 90+3), Muller, Ozil, Podolski (Schurrle 67), Gomez.

June 3 - Brussels
Belgium 1 (Ogunjimi 4)
Turkey 1 (Burak 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Rizzoli (Ita)
Belgium: Mignolet - Lombaerts, Kompany, Alderweireld, Witsel, Vertonghen (Vermaelen 46), Simons, Hazard (Mertens 60), Defour (Vossen 88), Chadli, Ogunjimi.
Turkey: Volkan Demirel - Sabri, Serdar, Servet, Caglar, Arda (Semih 85), Selcuk Sahin, Kazim-Richards, Selcuk Inan (Mehmet Topal 78), Emre Belozoglu, Burak (Mehmet Ekici 76).

June 3 - Astana
Kazakhstan 2 (Gridin 57, 68)
Azerbaijan 1 (Nadyrov 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 6,500. **Ref:** Norris (Sco)
Kazakhstan: Nesterenko - Mukhtarov, Logvinenko (Rozhkov 65), Geteriyev, Smakov, Schmidtgal, Nurdauletov, Khairullin (Kirov 82), Gridin, Ostapenko (Khiznichenko 79), Konysbayev.
Azerbaijan: Agayev - Medvedev, Melikov, Levin, Abushev, R F Sadygov, R A Sadygov, Ismaylov, J Huseynov (Nadyrov 61), R Aliyev (M Huseynov 79), Javadov.

June 7 - Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (M Huseynov 89)
Germany 3 (Ozil 29, Gomez 40, Schurrle 90+3)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Koukoulakis (Gre)
Azerbaijan: Agayev - Melikov, R F Sadygov, V Huseynov, Allahverdiyev, Abushev, Ismaylov (Isaev 57), Chertoganov (R A Sadygov 86), Nadyrov, Amirguliyev, Javadov (M Huseynov 71).
Germany: Neuer - Howedes, Hummels, Badstuber, Aogo, Lahm, Kroos, Muller (Holtby 88), Ozil (Gotze 81), Podolski (Schurrle 75), Gomez.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	7	7	0	0	22	3	21
Belgium	7	3	2	2	15	10	11
Turkey	6	3	1	2	9	7	10
Austria	6	2	1	3	10	10	7
Kazakhstan	6	1	0	5	2	15	3
Azerbaijan	6	1	0	5	5	18	3

03.09.10	Belgium v Germany	0-1
03.09.10	Kazakhstan v Turkey	0-3
07.09.10	Austria v Kazakhstan	2-0
07.09.10	Germany v Azerbaijan	6-1
07.09.10	Turkey v Belgium	3-2
08.10.10	Austria v Azerbaijan	3-0
08.10.10	Germany v Turkey	3-0
08.10.10	Kazakhstan v Belgium	0-2
12.10.10	Azerbaijan v Turkey	1-0
12.10.10	Belgium v Austria	4-4
12.10.10	Kazakhstan v Germany	0-3
25.03.11	Austria v Belgium	0-2
26.03.11	Germany v Kazakhstan	4-0
29.03.11	Belgium v Azerbaijan	4-1
29.03.11	Turkey v Austria	2-0
03.06.11	Austria v Germany	1-2
03.06.11	Belgium v Turkey	1-1
03.06.11	Kazakhstan v Azerbaijan	2-1
07.06.11	Azerbaijan v Germany	1-3
02.09.11	Azerbaijan v Belgium	
02.09.11	Germany v Austria	
02.09.11	Turkey v Kazakhstan	
06.09.11	Austria v Turkey	
06.09.11	Azerbaijan v Kazakhstan	
07.10.11	Azerbaijan v Austria	
07.10.11	Belgium v Kazakhstan	
07.10.11	Turkey v Germany	
11.10.11	Germany v Belgium	
11.10.11	Kazakhstan v Austria	
11.10.11	Turkey v Azerbaijan	

Group B

June 4 - Skopje
Macedonia 0
Republic of Ireland 2 (Keane 8, 37)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Meyer (Ger)
Macedonia: Bogatinov - Grncarov, G Popov, Noveski, Sikov, Trickovski, Sumulikoski, Demiri (Savik 72), Pandev, Naumoski (Hasani 10), Despotovski (Gjurovski 57).
Republic of Ireland: Given - Kelly, O'Shea, O'Dea, Kilbane, McGeady, Andrews, Whelan, S Hunt, Keane, Cox (Long 65).

June 4 - St Petersburg
Russia 3 (Pavlyuchenko 26, 59, pen 73)
Armenia 1 (Pizzelli 25)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 20,500. **Ref:** Lannoy (Fra)
Russia: Akinfeev - Ignashevich, V Berezutsky, Anyukov (Yanbaev 75), Zhirkov, Zyryanov (Dzagoev 82), Semshov (Glushakov 69), Torbinsky, Denisov, Arshavin, Pavlyuchenko.
Armenia: Berezovsky - Hovsepyan, Arzumanyan, Mkoyan, Hayrapetyan, Pachajyan (Manucharyan 57), K Mkrtchyan (Artak Edigaryan 90), Movsisyan, Henrikh Mkhitaryan, G Ghazaryan, Pizzelli (Artur Edigaryan 67).

June 4 - Bratislava
Slovakia 1 (Karhan 63)
Andorra 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Jemini (Alb)
Slovakia: Kello - Hubocan, Durica, Cech (Salata 83), Kucka (Sestak 46), Karhan, Jez, Hamsik, Vittek, Sebo, Holosko (Zofcak 74).
Andorra: Gomes - C Martinez, I Lima, Rubio, E Garcia, Bernaus, Vieira, Vales, Jimenez (Salvat 86), Ayala (Andorra 16), Silva (Gomez 63).

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovakia	6	4	1	1	6	4	13
Russia	6	4	1	1	9	4	13
Rep of Ireland	6	4	1	1	11	6	13
Armenia	6	2	2	2	10	7	8
Macedonia	6	1	1	4	5	8	4
Andorra	6	0	0	6	1	13	0

03.09.10	Andorra v Russia	0-2
03.09.10	Armenia v Rep of Ireland	0-1
03.09.10	Slovakia v Macedonia	1-0
07.09.10	Macedonia v Armenia	2-2
07.09.10	Rep of Ireland v Andorra	3-1
07.09.10	Russia v Slovakia	0-1
08.10.10	Andorra v Macedonia	0-2
08.10.10	Armenia v Slovakia	3-1
08.10.10	Rep of Ireland v Russia	2-3
12.10.10	Armenia v Andorra	4-0
12.10.10	Macedonia v Russia	0-1
12.10.10	Slovakia v Rep of Ireland	1-1
26.03.11	Andorra v Slovakia	0-1
26.03.11	Armenia v Russia	0-0
26.03.11	Rep of Ireland v Macedonia	2-1

Swapping sides...Mesa

CUBA

Forward defects

Striker Yosniel Mesa, who plays his club football for Cuban side Cienfuegos, defected while on duty with the national team at the CONCACAF Gold Cup in the USA.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Striker out of Euros

Tomas Necid will miss the remaining Euro qualifiers – against Scotland, Spain and Lithuania – after he damaged the anterior cruciate ligament, lateral ligament and cartilage in his right knee playing for CSKA Moscow against Terek Grozny in the Russian Premier League.

The 21-year-old striker, who has been capped 25 times by his country, is expected to be out of action for six months.

Scorer...Benjaminsen

7 penalties scored at international level by Frank Lampard, setting a new record for England

INTERNATIONALS

04.06.11	Macedonia v Rep of Ireland 0-2
04.06.11	Russia v Armenia 3-1
04.06.11	Slovakia v Andorra 1-0
02.09.11	Andorra v Armenia
02.09.11	Rep of Ireland v Slovakia
02.09.11	Russia v Macedonia
06.09.11	Macedonia v Andorra
06.09.11	Russia v Rep of Ireland
06.09.11	Slovakia v Armenia
07.10.11	Andorra v Rep of Ireland
07.10.11	Armenia v Macedonia
07.10.11	Slovakia v Russia
11.10.11	Macedonia v Slovakia
11.10.11	Rep of Ireland v Armenia
11.10.11	Russia v Andorra

Group C

June 3 - Toftir
Faroe Islands 0
Slovenia 2 (Matavz 29, Baldvinsson og 47)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 974. **Ref:** Drachta (Aut)
Faroe Islands: Mikkelsen - Naes (S Olsen 81), E Hansen, Baldvinsson, J Davidsen, Benjaminsen, Udsen (Atli Danielsen 45+2), Justinussen, Elttor, Holst (Mouritsen 75), Edmundsson.
Slovenia: S Handanovic - Brecko, Suler, Cesar, Jokic, Ilicic, Birsa (Mavric 47), Koren, Bacinovic, Matavz (Kirm 76), Novakovic (Ljubijankic 55).
Sent off: Suler 25min.

June 3 - Modena
Italy 3 (Rossi 21, Cassano 39, Pazzini 68)
Estonia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 21,151. **Ref:** Tudor (Rom)
Italy: Buffon - Chiellini, Balzaretti, Ranocchia, Maggio, Aquilani (Nocerino 24), Pirlo, Montolivo, Marchisio, Cassano (Pazzini 65), Rossi (Giovinco 79).
Estonia: Pareiko - Kruglov, Enar Jaager, Rahn, Piiroja, Klavan, Vunk, Teniste (Saag 58), S Puri, Kink (Kams 79), Zenjov (Ahjupera 58).

June 7 - Toftir
Faroe Islands 2 (Benjaminsen pen 43, A Hansen 47)
Estonia 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 1,715. **Ref:** Munukka (Fin)
Faroe Islands: Mikkelsen - Naes, Justinussen, E Hansen, Gregersen, Atli Danielsen, Holst (Mouritsen 85), Elttor (S Olsen 90+1), Benjaminsen, Baldvinsson, A Hansen (S Samuelsen 69). *Sent off: Justinussen 89min.*
Estonia: Pareiko - Rahn, Piiroja, Kruglov, Enar Jaager, S Puri, Vassiljev, Saag (Mosnikov 82), Kink, Ahjupera (Kams 66), Zenjov. *Sent off: S Puri 57min.*

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	6	5	1	0	14	1	16
Slovenia	7	3	2	2	9	4	11
Serbia	6	2	2	2	8	9	8
Estonia	7	2	1	4	7	11	7
N Ireland	5	1	3	1	3	3	6
Faroe Islands	7	1	1	5	5	18	4

11.08.10	Estonia v Faroe Islands 2-1
03.09.10	Estonia v Italy 1-2
03.09.10	Faroe Islands v Serbia 0-3
03.09.10	Slovenia v N Ireland 0-1
07.09.10	Italy v Faroe Islands 5-0
07.09.10	Serbia v Slovenia 1-1
08.10.10	N Ireland v Italy 0-0
08.10.10	Serbia v Estonia 1-3
08.10.10	Slovenia v Faroe Islands 5-1
12.10.10	Estonia v Slovenia 0-1
12.10.10	Faroe Islands v N Ireland 1-1
12.10.10	Italy v Serbia ..... (awarded) 3-0
25.03.11	Serbia v N Ireland 2-1
25.03.11	Slovenia v Italy 0-1
29.03.11	Estonia v Serbia 1-1
29.03.11	N Ireland v Slovenia 0-0
03.06.11	Faroe Islands v Slovenia 0-2
03.06.11	Italy v Estonia 3-0
07.06.11	Faroe Islands v Estonia 2-0
10.08.11	N Ireland v Faroe Islands
02.09.11	Faroe Islands v Italy
02.09.11	N Ireland v Serbia
02.09.11	Slovenia v Estonia
06.09.11	Estonia v N Ireland
06.09.11	Italy v Slovenia
06.09.11	Serbia v Faroe Islands
07.10.11	N Ireland v Estonia
07.10.11	Serbia v Italy
11.10.11	Italy v N Ireland
11.10.11	Slovenia v Serbia

Group D

June 3 - Minsk
Belarus 1 (Abidal og 20)
France 1 (Malouda 22)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Fernandez Borbalan (Spa)
Belarus: Veremko - Shitov, Martynovich, Verkhovtsov, Trubilo, Kalachev (V Hleb 90), Omelyanchuk, Bordachev, Tigorev, Voronkov, Putsilo (Kislyak 86).
France: Lloris - Sagna, Rami, Sakho, Abidal, A Diarra, Diaby (Remy 73), Malouda, Ribery, Nasri, Benzema.

June 3 - Bucharest
Romania 3 (Mutu 37, Marica 41, 55)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Eriksson (Swe)
Romania: Tatarusanu - Sapunaru, Tamas, Papp, Rat, Torje, Muresan, Bourceanu, Sanmartean (Tanase 63), Marica (Alexe 87), Mutu (Surdu 83).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Mujdza, Mravac, Spahic, Lulic, Medunjanin (Ibisevic 46), Rahimic, Pjanic, Misimovic, Ibricic (Stilic 64), Dzeko (Muslimovic 64).

June 7 - Minsk
Belarus 2 (Kornilenko pen 48, Putsilo 73)
Luxembourg 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Salmanov (Aze)
Belarus: Zhevnov - Kulchy (Kislyak 87), Kalachev, Trubilo (V Hleb 62), Tigorev, Omelyanchuk, Voronkov (Kornilenko 46), Putsilo, Bordachev, Verkhovtsov, Shitov.
Luxembourg: Joubert - Martino, Blaise, Hoffmann, Schnell, Peters, C Leweck (Collette 84), Da Mota (Laterza 77), Payal, Malget (Kitenge 60), Gerson.

June 7 - Zenica
Bosnia-Herzegovina 2 (Medunjanin 67, Maletic 90+1)
Albania 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Blom (Hol)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Spahic, Pandza, Mujdza (Maletic 73), Rahimic, Pjanic (Besic 77), Misimovic, Medunjanin, Lulic, Ibisevic (Muslimovic 61), Dzeko.
Albania: Ujkani - Vangjeli, Daliku, Curri, Agolli (Lila 60), Skela, Lala (Muzaka 73), Cana, Bulku, Bogdani (Duro 46), Salihi. *Sent off: Lila 87min.*

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	6	4	1	1	9	2	13
Belarus	7	3	3	1	6	2	12
Bosnia-Herz	6	3	1	2	8	7	10
Romania	6	2	2	2	8	6	8
Albania	6	2	2	2	4	6	8
Luxembourg	7	0	1	6	1	13	1

03.09.10	France v Belarus 0-1
03.09.10	Luxembourg v Bosnia-Herz 0-3
03.09.10	Romania v Albania 1-1
07.09.10	Albania v Luxembourg 1-0
07.09.10	Belarus v Romania 0-0
07.09.10	Bosnia-Herz v France 0-2
08.10.10	Albania v Bosnia-Herz 1-1
08.10.10	Luxembourg v Belarus 0-0
09.10.10	France v Romania 2-0
12.10.10	Belarus v Albania 2-0
12.10.10	France v Luxembourg 2-0
25.03.11	Luxembourg v France 0-2
26.03.11	Albania v Belarus 1-0
26.03.11	Bosnia-Herz v Romania 2-1
29.03.11	Romania v Luxembourg 3-1
03.06.11	Belarus v France 1-1
03.06.11	Romania v Bosnia-Herz 3-0
07.06.11	Belarus v Luxembourg 2-0
07.06.11	Bosnia-Herz v Albania 2-0
02.09.11	Albania v France
02.09.11	Belarus v Bosnia-Herz
02.09.11	Luxembourg v Romania
06.09.11	Bosnia-Herz v Belarus
06.09.11	Luxembourg v Albania
06.09.11	Romania v France
07.10.11	Bosnia-Herz v Luxembourg
07.10.11	France v Albania
07.10.11	Romania v Belarus
11.10.11	Albania v Romania
11.10.11	France v Bosnia-Herz

Group E

June 3 - Chisinau
Moldova 1 (Bugaiov 61)
Sweden 4 (Toivonen 11, Elmander 30, 58, Gerndt 88)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Marriner (Eng)
Moldova: Stanislav Namasco - Bolohan, Armas, Golovatenco, Racu, Ivanov, Gatcan (Tigirlas 46), Cebotaru (Patras 78), Bugaiov, Suvorov, Doros (Boghiu 63).
Sweden: Isaksson - Wendt, Mellberg, Majstorovic, Lustig, Hysen (Bajrami 41), A Svensson, S Larsson, Kallstrom, Elmander (Gerndt 76), Toivonen (Wernbloom 69).

June 3 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Finland 1 (Forssell 41)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,218. **Ref:** Sipailo (Lat)
San Marino: A Simoncini - F Vitaioli (Bacciocchi 88), D Simoncini, Alessandro Della Valle, Vannucci, Cervellini, F Bollini, M Vitaioli (Montagna 81), Selva, Mazza (Berretti 77), Manuel Marani.
Finland: Hradecky - Raitala, Pasanen, Moisander, Lampi, Vayrynen, Hetemaj (Sjolund 84), Heikkinen, Hamalainen, A Eremenko (Riski 68), Forssell (Sadik 90).

June 7 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Hungary 3 (Liptak 40, Szabics 49, Koman 83)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 1,915. **Ref:** Radovanovic (Mne)
San Marino: A Simoncini - F Vitaioli (Alex Della Valle 46), Alessandro Della Valle, Benedettini, Vannucci, Cervellini, F Bollini (Bacciocchi 79), M Vitaioli, Selva, Mazza, Manuel Marani (Berretti 64).
Hungary: Kiraly - Vanczak, Liptak (Pinter 87), Juhasz, Laczko, Koman, Hajnal (Czvitkovics 71), Elek, Dzsudzsak, Szabics (Koltai 83), Nemeth.

June 7 - Stockholm
Sweden 5 (Kallstrom 11, Ibrahimovic 31, 35, 53, Bajrami 83)
Finland 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 32,128. **Ref:** Gautier (Fra)
Sweden: Isaksson - Wendt, Mellberg, Majstorovic, Lustig, A Svensson, S Larsson (Wilhelmsson 89), Kallstrom, Bajrami, Toivonen (Ibrahimovic 25), Elmander (Wernbloom 81).
Finland: Jaakkola - Toivio, Pasanen, Moisander, Vayrynen, Hetemaj, Heikkinen (Halsti 46), Hamalainen (Aaritalo 46), R Eremenko, A Eremenko (Ring 80), Forssell.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Holland	6	6	0	0	21	5	18
Sweden	6	5	0	1	20	6	15
Hungary	7	4	0	3	18	13	12
Moldova	6	2	0	4	7	9	6
Finland	6	2	0	4	11	11	6
San Marino	7	0	0	7	0	33	0

03.09.10	Moldova v Finland 2-0
03.09.10	San Marino v Holland 0-5
03.09.10	Sweden v Hungary 2-0
07.09.10	Holland v Finland 2-1
07.09.10	Hungary v Moldova 2-1
07.09.10	Sweden v San Marino 6-0
08.10.10	Hungary v San Marino 8-0
08.10.10	Moldova v Holland 0-1
12.10.10	Finland v Hungary 1-2
12.10.10	Holland v Sweden 4-1
12.10.10	San Marino v Moldova 0-2
17.11.10	Finland v San Marino 8-0
25.03.11	Hungary v Holland 0-4
29.03.11	Holland v Hungary 5-3
29.03.11	Sweden v Moldova 2-1
03.06.11	Moldova v Sweden 1-4
03.06.11	San Marino v Finland 0-1
07.06.11	San Marino v Hungary 0-3
07.06.11	Sweden v Finland 5-0
02.09.11	Finland v Moldova
02.09.11	Holland v San Marino
02.09.11	Hungary v Sweden
06.09.11	Finland v Holland
06.09.11	Moldova v Hungary
06.09.11	San Marino v Sweden
07.10.11	Finland v Sweden
07.10.11	Holland v Moldova
11.10.11	Hungary v Finland
11.10.11	Moldova v San Marino
11.10.11	Sweden v Holland

Group F

June 3 - Split
Croatia 2 (Mandzukic 76, Kalinic 78)
Georgia 1 (Kankava 17)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 35,000. **Ref:** Johannesson (Swe)
Croatia: Runje - Simunic, Corluka, Vukojevic (Dujmovic 71), Srna, Pranjic, Modric, Perisic (Klasnic 71), Mandzukic, Jelavic (Kalinic 46), Eduardo.
Georgia: Loria - Salukvadze, Kvirkvelia, Khubutia, Khizanishvili, Kashia (Ananidze 80), Kaladze, Grigalava, Siradze (Dvalishvili 56), Kankava, A Iashvili (Daushvili 62).

June 4 - Piraeus
Greece 3 (Fetfatzidis 7, 63, K Papadopoulos 26)
Malta 1 (M Mifsud 54)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 14,750. **Ref:** Gil (Pol)
Greece: Konstantopoulos - Torosidis, Spyropoulos, Moras, K Papadopoulos, Tziolis, Ninis (Christodoulopoulos 80), Katsouranis, Karagounis (Kafes 70), Fetfatzidis, Salpigidis (Mitroglou 89).

FAROE ISLANDS

First win in 16 years

Frodi Benjaminsen and Arnbjorn Hansen were on target as the Faroe Islands won their first European Championship game in 16 years by beating Estonia 2-0. Faroes' Irish coach Brian Kerr has now won two competitive games, having also won against Lithuania in a World Cup qualifier in September 2009.

The Svangaskard Stadium in Toftir – a natural turf pitch which was first used for a World Cup qualifier against Belgium in 1992 – is to be converted to artificial grass.

GERMANY

Gomez going strong

Bayern Munich striker Mario Gomez scored both goals in Germany's 2-1 win in Austria and one in the 3-1 victory away to Azerbaijan, taking his tally to 13 in his last eight games for his country.

Joachim Low's side maintained their 100 per cent record in the Euro qualifying campaign and stretched their unbeaten record away from home to five years and three months.

On fire...Germany's Gomez

GREECE

Youngsters on target

Schalke defender Kyriakos Papadopoulos scored on his international debut for Greece in the 3-1 victory over Malta in the Euro 2012 qualifiers.

The 19-year-old was joined on the scoresheet by 20-year-old Olympiakos striker Ioannis Fetfatzidis, who scored twice.

Malta: Hogg - Caruana, Sciberras, Hutchinson (P Fenech 87), R Fenech, Briffa, S Bajada (Failla 80), A Agius, Schembri, M Mifsud, Bogdanovic (Cohen 60).

June 4 - Riga
Latvia 1 (Cauna pen 62)
Israel 2 (Benayoun 19, Tal Ben Haim (D) pen 43)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 6,147. **Ref:** Kelly (RoI)
Latvia: Vanins - Krjauklis, Klava, Ivanovs, Gorkss, Visnakovs (Rugins 71), Rafalskis (Zigajevs 28), Lazdins, Cauna, Rudnevs, Pereplotkins (Gauracs 60).
Israel: Aouate - Shpungin, Keinan, Gershon, Tal Ben Haim (D), Rafaelov (Tal Ben Haim (M) 79), A Cohen, Benayoun, Zahavi (Golasa 89), Hemed, Buzaglo (Natcho 69).

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Greece	6	4	2	0	8	3	14
Croatia	6	4	1	1	10	3	13
Israel	7	4	1	2	10	7	13
Georgia	7	2	3	2	5	5	9
Latvia	6	1	1	4	5	9	4
Malta	6	0	0	6	2	13	0

02.09.10	Israel v Malta	3-1
03.09.10	Greece v Georgia	1-1
03.09.10	Latvia v Croatia	0-3
07.09.10	Croatia v Greece	0-0
07.09.10	Georgia v Israel	0-0
07.09.10	Malta v Latvia	0-2
08.10.10	Georgia v Malta	1-0
08.10.10	Greece v Latvia	1-0
09.10.10	Israel v Croatia	1-2
12.10.10	Greece v Israel	2-1
12.10.10	Latvia v Georgia	1-1
17.11.10	Croatia v Malta	3-0
26.03.11	Georgia v Croatia	1-0
26.03.11	Israel v Latvia	2-1
26.03.11	Malta v Greece	0-1
29.03.11	Israel v Georgia	1-0
03.06.11	Croatia v Georgia	2-1
04.06.11	Greece v Malta	3-1
04.06.11	Latvia v Israel	1-2
02.09.11	Georgia v Latvia	
02.09.11	Israel v Greece	
02.09.11	Malta v Croatia	
06.09.11	Croatia v Israel	
06.09.11	Latvia v Greece	
06.09.11	Malta v Georgia	
07.10.11	Greece v Croatia	
07.10.11	Latvia v Malta	
11.10.11	Croatia v Latvia	
11.10.11	Georgia v Greece	
11.10.11	Malta v Israel	

Group G

June 4 - London
England 2 (Lampard pen 37, Young 51)
Switzerland 2 (Barnetta 32, 35)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 84,459. **Ref:** Skomina (Sln)
England: Hart - G Johnson, Ferdinand, Terry, A Cole (Baines 31), Parker, Walcott (Downing 78), Wilshere, Lampard (Young 46), Milner, Bent.
Switzerland: Benaglio - Lichtsteiner, Djourou, Senderos, Ziegler, Barnetta (Emeghara 90), Inler, Behrami (Dzemaili 59), Shaqiri, Xhaka, Derdiyok (Mehmedi 75).

June 4 - Podgorica
Montenegro 1 (Djalovic 53)
Bulgaria 1 (I Popov 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,000. **Ref:** Yefet (Isr)
Montenegro: M Bozovic - Basa, Zverotic (Jovetic 72), Savic, Pejovic, Pavicevic (Kascelan 82), V Bozovic (Fatic 76), Pekovic, Drincic, Vucinic, Djalovic.
Bulgaria: Mihaylov - I Ivanov, Bandalovski, Zanev, Manolev, Bodurov, Yanev (Genkov 84), S Petrov (Yankov 46), M Petrov (Delev 88), Marquinhos, I Popov.

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	5	3	2	0	11	3	11
Montenegro	5	3	2	0	4	1	11
Switzerland	5	1	2	2	7	7	5
Bulgaria	5	1	2	2	2	6	5
Wales	4	0	0	4	1	8	0

03.09.10	England v Bulgaria	4-0
03.09.10	Montenegro v Wales	1-0
07.09.10	Bulgaria v Montenegro	0-1
07.09.10	Switzerland v England	1-3
08.10.10	Montenegro v Switzerland	1-0
08.10.10	Wales v Bulgaria	0-1
12.10.10	England v Montenegro	0-0
12.10.10	Switzerland v Wales	4-1
26.03.11	Bulgaria v Switzerland	0-0
26.03.11	Wales v England	0-2
04.06.11	England v Switzerland	2-2
04.06.11	Montenegro v Bulgaria	1-1
02.09.11	Bulgaria v England	
02.09.11	Wales v Montenegro	
06.09.11	England v Wales	
06.09.11	Switzerland v Bulgaria	
07.10.11	Montenegro v England	
07.10.11	Wales v Switzerland	
11.10.11	Bulgaria v Wales	
11.10.11	Switzerland v Montenegro	

Group H

June 4 - Reykjavik
Iceland 0
Denmark 2 (Schone 60, Eriksen 75)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 7,629. **Ref:** Aydinus (Tur)
Iceland: Magnusson - B Saevarsson, Hreidarsson, Eiriksson, K Sigurdsson, O Skulason (Finnbogason 66), G Sigurdsson, A Gunnarsson, Helguson (Gudmundsson 77), Gudjohnsen, Sigthorsson.
Denmark: T Sorensen - Svensson, S Poulsen, Kvist (C Poulsen 60), Kjaer, Jacobsen, Zimling, Eriksen, Krohn-Dehli (Schone 46), Rommedahl, Bendtner.

June 4 - Lisbon
Portugal 1 (Helder Postiga 53)
Norway 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 47,829. **Ref:** Cakir (Tur)
Portugal: Eduardo - Joao Pereira (Silvio 73), Pepe, Bruno Alves, Fabio Coentrao, Carlos Martins (Ruben Micael 69), Raul Meireles, Joao Moutinho, Nani (Silvestre Varela 86), Helder Postiga, Cristiano Ronaldo.
Norway: Jarstein - Hogli, Demidov, Hangeland, J A Riise, Huseklepp (Braaten 75), B H Riise, Hauger, Grindheim (Henriksen 83), Gamst Pedersen, Carew (Abdellaoue 60).

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Portugal	5	3	1	1	11	7	10
Norway	5	3	1	1	6	4	10
Denmark	5	3	1	1	7	4	10
Cyprus	4	0	2	2	5	8	2
Iceland	5	0	1	4	2	8	1

03.09.10	Iceland v Norway	1-2
03.09.10	Portugal v Cyprus	4-4
07.09.10	Denmark v Iceland	1-0
07.09.10	Norway v Portugal	1-0
08.10.10	Cyprus v Norway	1-2
08.10.10	Portugal v Denmark	3-1
12.10.10	Denmark v Cyprus	2-0
12.10.10	Iceland v Portugal	1-3
26.03.11	Cyprus v Iceland	0-0
26.03.11	Norway v Denmark	1-1
04.06.11	Iceland v Denmark	0-2
04.06.11	Portugal v Norway	1-0
02.09.11	Cyprus v Portugal	
02.09.11	Norway v Iceland	
06.09.11	Denmark v Norway	
06.09.11	Iceland v Cyprus	
07.10.11	Cyprus v Denmark	
07.10.11	Portugal v Iceland	
11.10.11	Denmark v Portugal	
11.10.11	Norway v Cyprus	

Group I

June 3 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 2 (Erne 7, Polverino 36)
Lithuania 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,886. **Ref:** Kuchin (Kaz)
Liechtenstein: B Buchel - Martin Stocklasa, Ritzberger, M Buchel, Polverino, Kaufmann, N Hasler, Burgmeier, T Beck (A Christen 84), Fischer (M Christen 72), Erne (Hanselmann 87).
Lithuania: Setkus - Kijanskas, Stankevicius (D Cesnauskis 46), Skerla, Semberas, E Cesnauskis (Savenas 68), Sernas, Radavicius, Panka, Mikoliunas, Danilevicius (Labukas 46).

EURO 2012 QUALIFIERS – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	5	5	0	0	15	5	15
Czech Rep	5	3	0	2	6	3	9
Scotland	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Lithuania	5	1	1	3	3	8	4
Liechtenstein	5	1	0	4	3	10	3

03.09.10	Liechtenstein v Spain	0-4
03.09.10	Lithuania v Scotland	0-0
07.09.10	Czech Republic v Lithuania	0-1
07.09.10	Scotland v Liechtenstein	2-1
08.10.10	Czech Republic v Scotland	1-0
08.10.10	Spain v Lithuania	3-1
12.10.10	Liechtenstein v Czech Rep	0-2
12.10.10	Scotland v Spain	2-3
25.03.11	Spain v Czech Republic	2-1
29.03.11	Czech Rep v Liechtenstein	2-0
29.03.11	Lithuania v Spain	1-3
03.06.11	Liechtenstein v Lithuania	2-0
02.09.11	Lithuania v Liechtenstein	
03.09.11	Scotland v Czech Republic	
06.09.11	Scotland v Lithuania	
06.09.11	Spain v Liechtenstein	
07.10.11	Czech Republic v Spain	
08.10.11	Liechtenstein v Scotland	
11.10.11	Lithuania v Czech Republic	
11.10.11	Spain v Scotland	

The 9 group winners and the runner-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st, 3rd, 4th and 5th in the respective groups) qualify automatically for the finals. The 8 remaining runners-up will be drawn in 4 head-to-head, 2-leg play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Poland and Ukraine qualify automatically

Play-off dates:
1st legs - November 11/12, 2011;
2nd legs - November 15, 2011

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Group A

June 5 - Paynesville
Liberia 1 (Doe 30)
Cape Verde Islands 0
HT: 1-0

June 5 - Harare
Zimbabwe 2 (Musona 43, pen 90)
Mali 1 (Mahamane Traore 52)
HT: 1-0
Sent off: M Diarra (Mali) 90min

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cape Verde	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Mali	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Zimbabwe	4	1	2	1	3	3	5
Liberia	4	1	1	2	5	7	4

04.09.10	Cape Verde v Mali	1-0
05.09.10	Liberia v Zimbabwe	1-1
09.10.10	Mali v Liberia	2-1
10.10.10	Zimbabwe v Cape Verde	0-0
26.03.11	Cape Verde v Liberia	4-2
26.03.11	Mali v Zimbabwe	1-0
05.06.11	Liberia v Cape Verde	1-0
05.06.11	Zimbabwe v Mali	2-1
03.09.11	Mali v Cape Verde	
03.09.11	Zimbabwe v Liberia	
08.10.11	Cape Verde v Zimbabwe	
08.10.11	Liberia v Mali	

Group B

June 5 - Addis Abeba
Ethiopia 2 (Seid 42, 49)
Nigeria 2 (I Uche 27, Yobo 86)
HT: 1-1
Nigeria: Enyeama - Yobo, Taiwo, Ambrose, Okonkwo, Mikel, Obi, Musa, I Uche, Obinna, P Utaka.

June 5 - Conakry
Guinea 4 (Kalabane 6, I Bangoura 17, S Diallo 60, B Balde 62)
Madagascar 1 (Faed 24)
HT: 2-1

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	4	3	1	0	10	3	10
Nigeria	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Ethiopia	4	1	1	2	4	10	4
Madagascar	4	0	1	3	2	8	1

05.09.10	Ethiopia v Guinea	1-4
05.09.10	Nigeria v Madagascar	2-0
10.10.10	Guinea v Nigeria	1-0
10.10.10	Madagascar v Ethiopia	0-1
26.03.11	Madagascar v Guinea	1-1
27.03.11	Nigeria v Ethiopia	4-0
05.06.11	Ethiopia v Nigeria	2-2
05.06.11	Guinea v Madagascar	4-1
03.09.11	Guinea v Ethiopia	
03.09.11	Madagascar v Nigeria	
08.10.11	Ethiopia v Madagascar	
08.10.11	Nigeria v Guinea	

GRENADA

Skipper calls it a day

National captain Anthony Modeste retired from international football after the 4-0 loss to Guatemala that signalled the end of his side's participation in this year's Gold Cup.

The 35-year-old played in all three of Grenada's games in the tournament - as he did in 2009 when the Caribbean island made its debut in the Gold Cup.

HOLLAND

Stand-in shines

Newcastle United's reserve goalkeeper Tim Krul kept a clean sheet against Brazil on his international debut. The 23-year-old got his chance because of injuries to Maarten Stekelenburg and Michel Vorm.

Unbeaten debut...Krul

ITALY

Winners showdown

A friendly between Italy and Spain, the last two countries to win the World Cup, will take place in Bari on August 10.

Italy, who were world champions in 2006, have not beaten the current holders since the quarter-finals of the 1994 World Cup in the USA.

Double...Gervinho

INTERNATIONALS

Group C

June 4 - Chingola
Zambia 3 (C Katongo 47, 68, Mbesuma 86)
Mozambique 0
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Chansa (Zambia)

June 5 - Mitsamiouli
Comoros 1 (Mze M'Baba 83)
Libya 1 (Boussefi 43)
HT: 0-1

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Zambia	4	3	0	1	9	1	9
Libya	4	2	2	0	5	1	8
Mozambique	4	1	1	2	1	5	4
Comoros	4	0	1	3	1	9	1

05.09.10 Mozambique v Libya 0-0
05.09.10 Zambia v Comoros 4-0
09.10.10 Comoros v Mozambique 0-1
10.10.10 Libya v Zambia 1-0
27.03.11 Mozambique v Zambia 0-2
28.03.11 Libya v Comoros 3-0
04.06.11 Zambia v Mozambique 3-0
05.06.11 Comoros v Libya 1-1
03.09.11 Comoros v Zambia
03.09.11 Libya v Mozambique
08.10.11 Mozambique v Comoros
08.10.11 Zambia v Libya

Group D

June 4 - Marrakech
Morocco 4 (Benatia 27, Chamakh 39, Hadji 60, Assaidi 69)
Algeria 0
HT: 2-0
Morocco: Lamyaghri - Alioui, Benatia, El Kaoutari, El Kaddouri, Belhanda, Hermach (El Chihani 75), Kharja, Hadji (El Arabi 80), Chamakh, Assaidi (Boussoufa 90).
Algeria: M'Bolhi - Mostefa, Bougherra, Yahia, Mesbah, Kadir (Boudebouz 46), Yebda (Matmour 46), Lemmouchia, Lacen, Ziani, Djebbour (Soudani 79).

June 5 - Bangui
Central African Republic 2 (Momi 39, Dopekoulouyen 80)
Tanzania 1 (Nditi 75)
HT: 1-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Morocco	4	2	1	1	5	1	7
Cent Af Rep	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Tanzania	4	1	1	2	4	5	4
Algeria	4	1	1	2	2	7	4

03.09.10 Algeria v Tanzania 1-1
04.09.10 Morocco v Cent Af Rep 0-0
09.10.10 Tanzania v Morocco 0-1
10.10.10 Cent Af Rep v Algeria 2-0
26.03.11 Tanzania v Cent Af Rep 2-1
27.03.11 Algeria v Morocco 1-0
04.06.11 Morocco v Algeria 4-0
05.06.11 Cent Af Rep v Tanzania 2-1
03.09.11 Cent Af Rep v Morocco
03.09.11 Tanzania v Algeria
08.10.11 Algeria v Cent Af Rep
08.10.11 Morocco v Tanzania

Group E

June 4 - Yaounde
Cameroon 0
Senegal 0
Cameroon: Kameni - Bong, Mbia, N'Koulou, Angbwa, Nguemo (Bedimo 71), Enoh, Moukandjo (Webo 84), Aboubakar, Eto'o, Choupo-Moting (Chedjou 72).
Senegal: Coundoul - Sane, Diawara, Mangane (Sall 83), Mbengue, Diame (Ndaw 67), R Gomis, Dia, Sow, P D Cisse (N Ndiaye 60), Niang.
Sent off: Sane 90min, Dia 90+3min.

June 5 - Belle Vue
Mauritius 1 (Bru pen 9)
DR Congo 2 (Ilunga 16, Kabangu 45+1)
HT: 1-2

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP E

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal	4	3	1	0	12	2	10
DR Congo	4	2	1	1	8	6	7
Cameroon	4	1	2	1	4	3	5
Mauritius	4	0	0	4	2	15	0

04.09.10 Mauritius v Cameroon 1-3
05.09.10 DR Congo v Senegal 2-4
09.10.10 Cameroon v DR Congo 1-1
09.10.10 Senegal v Mauritius 7-0
26.03.11 Senegal v Cameroon 1-0
27.03.11 DR Congo v Mauritius 3-0
04.06.11 Cameroon v Senegal 0-0
05.06.11 Mauritius v DR Congo 1-2
03.09.11 Cameroon v Mauritius
03.09.11 Senegal v DR Congo
08.10.11 DR Congo v Cameroon
08.10.11 Mauritius v Senegal

Group F

June 4 - Windhoek
Namibia 1 (Shipahu 84)
Burkina Faso 4 (Abdou Traore 13, Bance pen 58, Alain Traore pen 76, Pitroipa 90+1)
HT: 0-1

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP F

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso	3	3	0	0	11	2	9
Gambia	2	1	0	1	4	4	3
Namibia	3	0	0	3	2	11	0

Mauritania withdrew before 1st round of games

04.09.10 Gambia v Namibia 3-1
09.10.10 Burkina Faso v Gambia 3-1
26.03.11 Burkina Faso v Namibia 4-0
04.06.11 Namibia v Burkina Faso 1-4
03.09.11 Namibia v Gambia
08.10.11 Gambia v Burkina Faso

Group G

June 4 - Freetown
Sierra Leone 1 (Bangura 48)
Niger 0
HT: 0-0

June 5 - Cairo
Egypt 0
South Africa 0
Egypt: El Hadary - Al Muhammady, Gomaa, Ghali, Fathalla (El Solayya 79), Moawad, Fathy, Abd Rabou, Shikabala (Ali 65), Zidan (Gedo 58), El Zaher.
South Africa: Khune - Ngcongca, Masilela, Sangweni, Gould, Dikgacoi, Letsholonyane, Jali, Tshabalala (Fransman 90), Mphela (Somma 86), Parker (Segolela 75).

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP G

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Africa	4	2	2	0	3	0	8
Niger	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Sierra Leone	4	1	2	1	3	4	5
Egypt	4	0	2	2	1	3	2

04.09.10 South Africa v Niger 2-0
05.09.10 Egypt v Sierra Leone 1-1
10.10.10 Niger v Egypt 1-0
10.10.10 Sierra Leone v South Africa 0-0
26.03.11 South Africa v Egypt 1-0
27.03.11 Niger v Sierra Leone 3-1
04.06.11 Sierra Leone v Niger 1-0
05.06.11 Egypt v South Africa 0-0
03.09.11 Niger v South Africa
03.09.11 Sierra Leone v Egypt
08.10.11 Egypt v Niger
08.10.11 South Africa v Sierra Leone

Group H

June 5 - Cotonou
Benin 2 (Sessegnon 56, pen 61)
Ivory Coast 6 (Ya Konan 13, Drogba 22, pen 75, Gervinho 31, 81, Bony 86)
HT: 0-3
Ivory Coast: Barry - Eboue, Brou, Lolo, Grosso, Coulibaly, Y Toure, Doumbia (Gradel 54), Gervinho, Ya Konan (Bony 65), Drogba (Romaric 88).

June 5 - Bujumbura
Burundi 3 (Ndikumana 29, Ntibazonkiza 53, Kavumbagu 84)
Rwanda 1 (Bokota 48)
HT: 1-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP H

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast (Q)	4	4	0	0	12	3	12
Burundi	4	1	1	2	5	6	4
Benin	4	1	1	2	7	9	4
Rwanda	4	1	0	3	4	10	3

04.09.10 Ivory Coast v Rwanda 3-0
05.09.10 Benin v Burundi 1-1
09.10.10 Burundi v Ivory Coast 0-1
09.10.10 Rwanda v Benin 0-3
26.03.11 Rwanda v Burundi 3-1
27.03.11 Ivory Coast v Benin 2-1
05.06.11 Benin v Ivory Coast 2-6
05.06.11 Burundi v Rwanda 3-1
03.09.11 Burundi v Benin
03.09.11 Rwanda v Ivory Coast
08.10.11 Benin v Rwanda
08.10.11 Ivory Coast v Burundi

Group I

June 3 - Kumasi
Ghana 3 (Vorsah 62, Tagoe 66, Agyemang-Badu 78)
Congo 1 (Moussilou 75)
HT: 0-0
Sent off: Abdoulaye (Congo) 50min
Ghana: Kingson - Paintsil, Opare, John Mensah, Vorsah, Agyemang-Badu, Essien (D Boateng 72), K-P Boateng (Adiyiah 56), Muntari (A Ayew 61), K Asamoah, Tagoe.

June 5 - Mbabane
Swaziland 1 (Kunene 80)
Sudan 2 (Galag 64, Deen 88)
HT: 0-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP I

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	4	3	1	0	9	1	10
Sudan	4	3	1	0	7	1	10
Congo	4	1	0	3	4	9	3
Swaziland	4	0	0	4	2	11	0

04.09.10 Sudan v Congo 2-0
05.09.10 Swaziland v Ghana 0-3
10.10.10 Congo v Swaziland 3-1
10.10.10 Ghana v Sudan 0-0
27.03.11 Congo v Ghana 0-3
27.03.11 Sudan v Swaziland 3-0
03.06.11 Ghana v Congo 3-1
05.06.11 Swaziland v Sudan 1-2
03.09.11 Congo v Sudan
03.09.11 Ghana v Swaziland
08.10.11 Sudan v Ghana
08.10.11 Swaziland v Congo

Group J

June 4 - Kampala
Uganda 2 (Walusimbi 36, Massa 57)
Guinea-Bissau 0
HT: 1-0

June 5 - Luanda
Angola 1 (Manucho 69)
Kenya 0
HT: 0-0

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP J

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uganda	4	3	1	0	6	0	10
Angola	4	2	0	2	3	5	6
Kenya	4	1	1	2	2	3	4
Guinea-Bissau	4	1	0	3	1	4	3

04.09.10 Guinea-Bissau v Kenya 1-0
04.09.10 Uganda v Angola 3-0
09.10.10 Angola v Guinea-Bissau 1-0
09.10.10 Kenya v Uganda 0-0
26.03.11 Guinea-Bissau v Uganda 0-1
26.03.11 Kenya v Angola 2-1
04.06.11 Uganda v Guinea-Bissau 2-0
05.06.11 Angola v Kenya 1-0
03.09.11 Angola v Uganda
03.09.11 Kenya v Guinea-Bissau
08.10.11 Guinea-Bissau v Angola
08.10.11 Uganda v Kenya

Group K

June 5 - Lobatse
Botswana 0
Malawi 0

June 5 - Sousse
Tunisia 5 (Jemaa 22, 45, 52, Abdennour 35, Darragi 46)
Chad 0
HT: 3-0
Sent off: Mbaye (Chad) 43min
Tunisia: Balbouli - Derbali, Chammam, Hicheri, Abdennour, Korbi (Yahia 72), Traoui, Msakni, Darragi (Chedli 63), Allagui, Jemaa (Chehoudi 53).

2012 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS – GROUP K

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Botswana (Q)	7	5	2	0	7	2	17
Tunisia	6	3	1	2	12	6	10
Malawi	6	2	4	0	11	6	10
Togo	6	0	3	3	5	8	3
Chad	7	0	2	5	5	18	2

IVORY COAST

Finals place booked

The Elephants booked their place alongside Botswana and co-hosts Gabon and Equatorial Guinea in next year's African Nations Cup finals with a 6-2 victory away to Benin.

Goals from Didier Ya Konan, Didier Drogba (two), Gervinho (two) and Wilfried Bony made it four wins from four games in Group H for Francois Zahoui's side

KAZAKHSTAN

Double for debutant

Tobol forward Sergei Gridin scored twice on his debut in the 2-1 win over Azerbaijan.

Kazakhstan had suffered five straight Euro 2012 qualifying defeats prior to a victory that national coach Miroslav Beranek said will "allow us to continue pursuing the goals we've set".

Ordabasy goalkeeper Roman Nesterenko also made his first international appearance in the game.

MEXICO

Five fail drugs test

Antonio "Sinha" Naelson, Christian Bermudez, Edgar Duenas, Francisco Javier Rodriguez and goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa were all suspended during the CONCACAF Gold Cup after testing positive for the banned substance clenbuterol – which is a drug used to treat breathing disorders – during the team's pre-tournament training camp.

Mexico were allowed to replace all five players during the tournament.

Banned...Ochoa

01.07.10	Chad v Togo	2-2
01.07.10	Tunisia v Botswana	0-1
09.07.10	Botswana v Chad	1-0
09.07.10	Togo v Malawi	1-1
11.08.10	Chad v Tunisia	1-3
11.08.10	Malawi v Botswana	1-1
04.09.10	Botswana v Togo	2-1
04.09.10	Tunisia v Malawi	2-2
09.10.10	Malawi v Chad	6-2
10.10.10	Togo v Tunisia	1-2
17.11.10	Botswana v Tunisia	1-0
17.11.10	Togo v Chad	0-0
26.03.11	Chad v Botswana	0-1
26.03.11	Malawi v Togo	1-0
05.06.11	Botswana v Malawi	0-0
05.06.11	Tunisia v Chad	5-0
03.09.11	Malawi v Tunisia	
03.09.11	Togo v Botswana	
08.10.11	Chad v Malawi	
08.10.11	Tunisia v Togo	

The 11 group winners, the runner-up in Group K (the only 5-team group) and the 2 other runners-up with the best record (against the teams finishing 1st and 3rd in the respective groups) qualify for the finals. Co-hosts Equatorial Guinea and Gabon qualify automatically

Q (in tables) = qualified

NATIONS CUP

In Dublin

May 24
Republic of Ireland 5 (Ward 24, Keane 37, pen 54, Cathcart og 45, Cox 80)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 12,083. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Republic of Ireland: Given (Forde 72) - McShane, Kelly, Delaney, Ward, Coleman (Lawrence 55), Andrews, Foley (S Hunt 70), Treacy, Keane (Keogh 62), Cox.
Northern Ireland: Blayney - Thompson, Cathcart, McAuley, Hodson, Carson (McGinn 72), Davis (Garrett 76), Clingan, Gorman (Coates 56), McQuoid (Norwood 46), Feeney (Boyce 72).
Sent off: Thompson 53min.

May 25
Wales 1 (Earnshaw 36)
Scotland 3 (Morrison 55, Miller 64, Berra 70)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 6,036. **Ref:** Crangle (Nir)
Wales: Myhill - Eardley (Matthews 61), Morgan, Blake, Taylor (Gunter 46), Tudur Jones (Vaughan 72), Dorman (Cotterill 60), King (Ramsey 61), Vokes (Morison 72), Earnshaw, Easter.
Scotland: McGregor - Whittaker (Bardsley 81), G Caldwell (Hanley 84), Berra, Crainey (Martin 81), Naismith, Brown, Adam (McArthur 88), Morrison (Robson 73), McCormack (Bannan 73), Miller.

May 27
Wales 2 (Ramsey 36, Earnshaw 69)
Northern Ireland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 529. **Ref:** Kelly (Rol)
Wales: Hennessey (Price 74) - Gunter (Matthews 72), Taylor, Collison (Tudur Jones 62), D Collins, Gabbidon, Cotterill, Bellamy (Earnshaw 62), Morison (Vokes 80), Ramsey (Dorman 89), Vaughan.
Northern Ireland: Tuffey - Hodson, Coates, Cathcart (Dallas 63), McAuley, Norwood, Carson, Garrett (Winchester 76), McGinn (Owens 80), Feeney (Boyce 73), Gorman.

May 29
Republic of Ireland 1 (Keane 23)
Scotland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 17,694. **Ref:** Whitby (Wal)
Republic of Ireland: Given - McShane, O'Dea (Foley 66), Kelly, Ward, Lawrence (Coleman 62), Andrews, Fahey, S Hunt, Keane (Treacy 83), Cox.
Scotland: McGregor - Whittaker, Hanley, Berra, Bardsley, Forrest (McCormack 85), Brown, Adam (Bannan 62), Robson (Maguire 75), Naismith, Miller.

NATIONS CUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rep of Ireland	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Scotland	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Wales	3	1	0	2	3	6	3
N Ireland	3	0	0	3	0	10	0

08.02.11	Rep of Ireland v Wales	3-0
09.02.11	Northern Ireland v Scotland	0-3
24.05.11	Rep of Ireland v N Ireland	5-0
25.05.11	Wales v Scotland	1-3
27.05.11	Wales v Northern Ireland	2-0
29.05.11	Rep of Ireland v Scotland	1-0

KIRIN CUP

In Japan

June 1 - Niigata
Japan 0
Peru 0
Att: 39,048. **Ref:** Webb (Eng)
Japan: Kawashima - Konno, Kurihara, Inoha (Moriwaki 75), Yasuda (Koroki 71), Endo, Hasebe (Hosogai 90+1), Nishi (K Honda 46), Maeda (Lee 67), Sekiguchi (Nagatomo 67), Okazaki.
Peru: Libman - Acasiete, Advincula, Rabanal (Yotun 62), Revoredo, Vilchez, Balbin (Ballon 62), Cruzado (Lobaton 73), Cueva (Chiroque 61), Ramirez, Farfan (Ruidiaz 67).

June 4 - Matsumoto
Czech Republic 0
Peru 0
Att: 7,592. **Ref:** Sato (Jap)
Czech Republic: Cech - Kusnir (Gebre Selassie 46), R Hubnik, Rajnoch, Kadlec, Vacek, Trapp (Janda 80), Petrzela (Rezek 46), Kolar (Lafata 78), Fenin (Pilar 46), Necid (M Hubnik 66).
Peru: R Fernandez - Carmona, Ramos, Balbin, Acasiete (Vilchez 59), Chiroque (Cueva 57), Guevara (Ramirez 57), Cruzado, Yotun (Rabanal 68), Ruidiaz (Farfan 59), Advincula (Lobaton 76).

June 7 - Yokohama
Japan 0
Czech Republic 0
Att: 65,856. **Ref:** Atkinson (Eng)
Japan: Kawashima - Konno, Inoha (Makino 64), Nagatomo, Uchida, Yoshida, Endo (Ienaga 64), Hasebe, Lee, Okazaki (Sekiguchi 89), Honda.
Czech Republic: Cech - M Kadlec, Rajnoch, R Hubnik, Sivok (Gebre Selassie 46), Kolar, Petrzela (Pilar 83), Vacek, Fenin (Necid 90), Rezek (Janda 90+2), Lafata (M Hubnik 66).

KIRIN CUP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Czech Rep	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Japan	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Peru	2	0	2	0	0	0	2

FRIENDLIES

Wednesday, May 25

May 25 - Resistencia
Argentina 4 (Hauche 8, 44, Fernandez 36, Perez 73)
Paraguay 2 (Zeballos 14, Marecos 55)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 23,000. **Ref:** Silvera (Uru)
Argentina: Carrizo - Pillud (Quilez 63), Fernandez, Lopez (Bottinelli 74), Monzon, Chavez, Rinaudo, Valeri (Rojas 85), Perez (Viatri 77), Lamela (Mouche 58), Hauche (Morales 64).
Paraguay: Silva - Salinas (Bartomeus 58), Benegas, Ayala (Huth 71), Marecos, Gaona, M Riveros (Torales 46), Molinas, M Benitez (Cristaldo 46), J Benitez (Ramirez 71), Zeballos (R Cardozo 77).

May 25 - Manzini
Swaziland 0
Botswana 0

Thursday, May 26

May 26 - Havana
Cuba 1 (Hernandez 90)
Nicaragua 1 (Leguias pen 44)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Brea (Cub)
Cuba: O Molina - Marquez, R Fernandez, Y Colome, Urgelles, Francisco, J Colome, Cervantes, Gomez (Quesada 65), Hernandez, Linares (Lahera 65).
Nicaragua: Espinoza - Gutierrez, Parrales, Solorzano, Mendez, Lazo (Pavon 65), Barrera, Leguias, Roman (Rodriguez 70), Villanueva, Zeledon.

Friday, May 27

May 27 - Bridgetown
Barbados 0
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
Ref: Skeete (Bbs)
Barbados: Boxhill - Harte, Odle (Jeffrey Williams 46), Brathwaite, Joseph, Lavine (Latham 66), Skeete, Lovell, Straker, Paul, Griffith.
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Sandy - Hamlett, Richardson, Balcombe, Cuffy, Stephenson, W Joseph (Greaves 39), Lee, Howard, M Samuel (McBurnett 77), Trimmingham.

May 27 - St George's
Grenada 2 (Murray 3, 47)
Antigua & Barbuda 2 (Burton 51, Alexander 73)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bedeau (Gda)
Grenada: Louison (Noel 46) - S Rennie, B Bubb (K Joseph 46), R Charles, P Modeste (Leo 63), Cyrus (S Phillip 46), Straker (Langaigne 60), Murray, A Modeste, Johnson (Marshall 46), Julien (M Phillip 74).
Antigua & Barbuda: DeCastro (James 46) - Carr, A Thomas, R Gregory, Mack, Robinson (Phillip 55), Griffith, T Thomas, Burton (G Gregory 63), Byers (R Christian 72), Skepple. *Other used sub: Alexander.*

Saturday, May 28

May 28 - Havana
Cuba 2 (Hernandez 9, Lahera 16)
Nicaragua 1 (Dranguet og 89)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Rubalcaba (Cub)
Cuba: O Molina - Marquez (Dranguet 75), R Fernandez, Y Colome, Urgelles, Francisco, J Colome (Mesa 75), Cervantes, Gomez, Hernandez (S Fernandez 70), Lahera (Linares 57).
Sent off: Y Colome 23min.
Nicaragua: Espinoza - Gutierrez, Parrales, Solorzano, Mendez, Lazo, Barrera, Leguias, Roman, Villanueva, Zeledon.

May 28 - Seattle, USA
Mexico 1 (Torres Nilo 7)
Ecuador 1 (Arroyo 37)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 50,305
Mexico: G Ochoa - Osorio (Juarez 68), Moreno, F Rodriguez, Torres Nilo, Torrado, I Castro, Barrera (E Hernandez 75), Guardado, Naelson (G Dos Santos 68), De Nigris.
Ecuador: Banguera - Reasco, Erazo, G Caicedo, Saritama, Arroyo (N Mina 81), W Ayovi (Calderon 80), Castillo, Mendez (Minda 70), Benitez (F Caicedo 88), J Ayovi.

Sunday, May 29

May 29 - Bridgetown
Barbados 1 (Jeffrey Williams 24)
Guyana 1 (Skeete og 76)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Taylor (Bbs)
Barbados: Eastmond - Harte (Boxhill 30), Joseph, Skeete, Straker, Paul, Jeffrey Williams, Lovell, Bourne, Sargeant (Marquez 67), Gibson.
Sent off: Eastmond 29min.
Guyana: Clarke - Adams, Bourne, Lythcott, Nelson, Nobrega, Fraser, Beresford, Mills, Holder, Europe (Sandiford 70).

May 29 - Addis Abeba
Ethiopia 1 (Diriba)
Sudan 2 (Abdel Kader x2)
HT: 1-0

May 29 - Sinsheim
Germany 2 (Gomez 20, Schurrle 35)
Uruguay 1 (Gargano 48)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 25,655. **Ref:** Benquerenca (Por)
Germany: Neuer - Lahm (Howedes 66), A Friedrich (Badstuber 66), Hummels, Schmelzer, Rolfes, Kroos (Trasch 79), Muller (Gotze 79), Ozil (Klose 46), Schurrle (Podolski 58), Gomez.
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Godin, Caceres, Arevalo (Eguren 76), Gargano (Abreu 87), Cavani, Forlan, A Pereira (Ramirez 55), Suarez.

May 29 - Houston, USA
Honduras 2 (Costly 44, Bengtson pen 50)
El Salvador 2 (Zelaya 72, Corrales 76)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,380. **Ref:** Villareal (USA)
Honduras: N Valladares - Sabillon (R Nunez 59), Beckeles (Espinosa 59), Bernardez, Leveron, Delgado, Mejia, E Martinez, O Garcia, Costly (Hernandez 63), Bengtson.
El Salvador: Montes - Garcia, Anaya, Turcios, Umanzor (R Hernandez 46), R Sanchez (J Alas 60), D Alas, Romero (E Sanchez 74), Quintanilla (Baires 69), Zelaya (A Flores 83), Blanco (Corrales 64).

May 29 - Panama City
Panama 2 (G Gomez 2, Quintero 46)
Grenada 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Perea (Pan)
Panama: Penedo - Machado, Cummings, Davis, Dasent, G Gomez (Haywood 62), Bonaga (G Torres 46), Barahona (Quintero 46), Cooper (Godoy 62), Tejada (Addles 46), B Perez (Renteria 46).
Grenada: Louison - Cyrus (Langaigne 46), Johnson, A Modeste, Marshall (S Phillip 86), Murray (K Joseph 65), P Modeste, R Charles (S Rennie 70), Straker, B Bubb (Julien 65), Facey (M Phillip 84).

May 29 - Mhlume
Swaziland 1 (Shongwe 69)
Malawi 1 (Nyondo 56)
HT: 0-0

NIGERIA

Eagles' wings clipped

Four days after beating Argentina 4-1 in a friendly, the Super Eagles were held to a surprise 2-2 draw away to Ethiopia in the African Nations Cup qualifiers. Joseph Yobo scored four minutes from time to save a point for the visitors, who had earlier led through Ikechukwu Uche.

Irish captain...Robbie Keane

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Hosts win trophy

Giovanni Trapattoni's side won the inaugural four-team Home Nations tournament, which was played at Dublin's Aviva Stadium in February and May. The hosts won all three of their games without conceding a goal.

The competition will be held in Wales in 2013.

ROMANIA

Tour defeats

Following the resignation of Razvan Lucescu after the 3-0 win against Bosnia, his assistant Stefan Iovan and Under-21 coach Emil Sandoi took charge of Romania's two friendlies in South America.

Iovan and Sandoi's charges lost 1-0 to Brazil and 2-0 to Paraguay.

RUSSIA

Reserve scores three

Replacement striker Roman Pavlyuchenko scored a hat-trick as Russia came from a goal behind to beat Armenia in the Euro qualifiers. The Tottenham Hotspur striker was called into the side when Aleksandr Kerzhakov suffered a thigh problem in the final training session.

INTERNATIONALS

May 29 - Sousse
Tunisia 3 (Darragi pen 32, pen 48, Chehoudi 45+2)
Central African Republic 0
HT: 2-0
Tunisia: Balbouli - Derbali, Hicheri, Abdennour, Chemmam, Korbi, Traoui, Darragi, Msakni, Chehoudi, Kasraoui.

Wednesday, June 1

June 1 - Toronto
Canada 2 (Dunfield 24, Ricketts 90+3)
Ecuador 2 (Benitez 62, Arroyo 64)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 14,356
Canada: Borjan - Ledgerwood, McKenna, Jakovic (Hainault 39), De Jong, Johnson (Peters 79), Dunfield (De Guzman 46), Hutchinson, De Rosario, Simpson (Friend 58), Jackson (Ricketts 85).
Ecuador: Elizaga - Reasco, G Caicedo, Erazo, W Ayovi, Castillo, Noboa (Mendez 52), Saritama (Minda 77), Arroyo (Plata 90), Benitez, J Ayovi.

June 1 - Guatemala City
Guatemala 0
Venezuela 2 (Fedor 24, Perozo 66)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Bonilla (ESv)
Guatemala: Jerez - Medina (Arreola 46), G Cabrera, Gallardo (E Gonzalez 74), Noriega, Velasquez, Pappa, Figueroa, J Lopez (Castrillo 78), Leon (Romero 68), Isaula (Pezzarossi 46).
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales, Cichero, Perozo, C Gonzalez (Meza 71), Lucena, Rincon (F Flores 90), Seijas (Jimenez 77), Orozco (A Gonzalez 77), Fedor (Moreno 66), Maldonado (Pena 86).

June 1 - Denver, USA
Mexico 3 (G Dos Santos 23, 30, De Nigris 43)
New Zealand 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 45,401
Mexico: G Ochoa - Juarez, F Rodriguez, Moreno (Duenas 63), Salcido, Torrado, Barrera (Bermudez 46), I Castro (Zavala 46), Guardado (E Hernandez 46), De Nigris, G Dos Santos (Reyna 46).
New Zealand: Moss - Reid, Vicelich, Elliott (Clapham 72), Brown, Smeltz (Killen 46), Barbarouses, Fitzgerald (Brockie 46), Boyens (Sigmund 72), Boxall (Mulligan 46), Wood (McGlinchey 66).

June 1 - Abuja
Nigeria 4 (I Uche 10, 40, Obinna pen 27, Emenike 52)
Argentina 1 (Boselli pen 90+8)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Chaibou (Ngr)
Nigeria: Enyeama (Aiyenugba 46) - Yobo, Taiwo, Ambrose, Okonkwo (Yussuf 67), Mikel, Obi (Ogude 72), K Uche (Musa 46), I Uche, Obinna (P Utaka 80), Anichebe (Emenike 44).
Argentina: Gabbarini - Zabaleta, Garay (Musacchio 66), Fazio, E Insua, Belluschi (Bertolo 62), Bolatti, Costa (Cabral 57), Gaitan, Boselli, Perotti (Jara 68).

June 1 - Kiev
Ukraine 2 (Tymoshchuk 55, Voronin 60)
Uzbekistan 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ozkahya (Tur)
Ukraine: Dikan - Fedetskyi, Kucher, Khacheridi, Shevchuk, Husiev (Nazarenko 70), Tymoshchuk (Kravchenko 85), Oleynik (Kozhanov 46), Shevchenko (Voronin 46), Devic (Selezniov 55), Milevskyi (Rotan 46).
Uzbekistan: Nesterov - Tukhtakhodjaev (Filiposyan 76), S Juraev (Rajabov 59), Mullajanov, Haydarov, Andreev (Karimov 79), Ahmedov, Tursunov, Bikmaev (Otakuziyev 51), Shadrin (Karpenko 56), Shatskikh (Turaev 71).

Friday, June 3

June 3 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 1 (Chan Siu-ki 59)
Malaysia 1 (Yahaya 65)
HT: 0-0

June 3 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 0
Hungary 1 (Szabics 53)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 1,213. **Ref:** Thorvaldur (Ice)
Luxembourg: Joubert - Blaise (Malget 84), Hoffmann, Schnell, Mutsch, Gerson (Martino 61), Payal, Peters (Pedro 80), Bettmer (Laterza 19), C Leweck (Collette 84), Da Mota (Kitenge 61).
Hungary: Bogdan - Vanczak, Liptak, Juhasz, Laczko, Koman (Czvitkovics 68), Vadocz (Pinter 68), Elek (Szabics 46), Dzsudzsak, Hajnal (Koltai 80), Tokoli (Nemeth 46).

June 3 - Seoul
South Korea 2 (Park Chu-young 10, Kim Young-kwon 54)
Serbia 1 (Petrovic 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Albadwawi (UAE)
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Cha Du-ri, Hong Jeong-ho, Lee Jung-soo, Kim Young-kwon, Ki Sung-yueng (Shin Hyung-min 87), Lee Chung-yong (Koo Ja-cheol 78), Kim Jung-woo (Yoon Bit-garam 75), Lee Yong-rae, Lee Keun-ho (Lee Sung-hyun 62), Park Chu-young (Jung Jo-gook 82).
Serbia: Saranov - Tomovic, Subotic (Rajkovic 83), Bisevac, Kolarov (Obradovic 46), Petrovic, Kuzmanovic (Trivunovic 68), D Stankovic (Petronijevic 77), Miric (Damjanovic 46), Despotovic (Ilic 76), Tosic.

Saturday, June 4

June 4 - Santa Cruz
Bolivia 0
Paraguay 2 (Barrios 33, Santander 71)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Garay (Per)
Bolivia: Arias - Alvarez, Raldes, Ronald Rivero, L Gutierrez, J Vaca (Rojas 56), Robles (R Garcia 65), Flores (Pedriel 76), Cardozo (Campos 56), Pena, Martins.
Paraguay: Villar - M Caceres, Da Silva, Veron, Marecos, Santana (N Ortigoza 74), C Riveros (V Caceres 74), Estigarribia (Torres 74), Gaona (Vera 74), Santa Cruz (Martinez 63), Barrios (Santander 63).

June 4 - Goiania
Brazil 0
Holland 0
Ref: Amarilla (Par)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Daniel Alves, Lucio, Thiago Silva, Andre Santos (Adriano Correia 84), Lucas Leiva (Sandro 65), Elano (Lucas Silva 65), Ramires, Robinho (Elias 75), Fred (Leandro Damiao 75), Neymar. *Sent off: Ramires 79min.*
Holland: Krul - Van der Wiel (Boulahrouz 85), Heitinga, Mathijsen, Pieters, N De Jong (Maduro 64), Strootman (Schaars 74), Afellay, Kuyt (Elia 64), Robben, Van Persie (Huntelaar 64).

June 4 - Foxboro
United States 0
Spain 4 (Cazorla 28, 41, Negredo 32, Fernando Torres 73)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 64,121. **Ref:** Silva (Uru)
United States: Howard - Spector, Onyewu (Goodson 46), Ream, Lichaj, Kljestan, Jones (Bradley 46), Edu (Cherundolo 46), Rogers (Dempsey 46), Altidore (Wondolowski 46), Agudelo (Bedoya 65).
Spain: Reina (Casillas 76) - Sergio Ramos (Capdevila 65), Pique, Albiol, Arbeloa, Busquets (Bruno Soriano 46), Xabi Alonso, Cazorla, Silva (Valero 65), Negredo (Fernando Torres 46), Villa (Iniesta 46).

Sunday, June 5

June 5 - Adelaide
Australia 3 (Kennedy 9, 59, Troisi pen 90+3)
New Zealand 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 21,281. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)
Australia: Coe - Zullo (McKay 69), Emerton (Vidosic 46), Wilkshire (Williams 46), Kennedy (Brosque 60), Troisi, Holman (Kruse 46), Valeri (Milligan 65), Kilkenny, Spiranovic, McKain.
New Zealand: Moss (Gleeson 77) - Sigmund, Brown (Mulligan 85), Smeltz, Killen, Barbarouses, McGlinchey (Rojas 56), Boyens (Fitzgerald 46), Boxall, Wood (Clapham 63), Brockie.

June 5 - Kunming
China 1 (Gao Lin 64)
Uzbekistan 0
HT: 0-0
China: Yang Zhi - Rong Hao (Bai Yuefeng 73), Li Xuepeng, Feng Xiaoting, Zhao Xuri (Huang Bowen 63), Deng Zhuoxiang (Gao Lin 63), Feng Renliang, Yang Hao, Zheng Zhi, Liu Yu, Yu Hai (Yu Hanchao 46).
Uzbekistan: T Juraev - Filiposyan (Karimov 79), Mulladjanov (Haydarov 63), S Juraev, Djeparov, Turaev, Shadrin, Geynrikh, Kapadze, Tukhtakhodjaev, Andreev (Rajabov 49).

June 5 - Warsaw
Poland 2 (A Mierzejewski 26, Pawel Brozek 67)
Argentina 1 (Ruben 47)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Grafe (Ger)
Poland: Szczesny - Piszczek, Wojtkowiak, Jodlowiec, Wawrzyniak, Blaszczykowski, Murawski (Matuszczyk 75), Dudka, A Mierzejewski (Kucharczyk 80), Grosicki (Pawel Brozek 57), R Lewandowski (Klich 90).
Argentina: Gabbarini - Zabaleta (Insua 46), Musacchio, Fazio (Belluschi 46), Ansaldi, Bertolo (Bottinelli 46), Bolatti, Cabral (Formica 68), Piatti (Gaitan 78), Ruben, Cristaldo.

Monday, June 6

June 6 - Donetsk
Ukraine 1 (Tymoshchuk 53)
France 4 (Gameiro 58, Martin 87, 90+2, Kaboul 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 11,200. **Ref:** Clattenburg (Eng)
Ukraine: Pyatov - Kobin, Kucher (Khacheridi 33), Ishchenko, Shevchuk, Tymoshchuk, Rotan, Nazarenko (Kozhanov 62), Husiev (Khudobiak 74), Devic (Selezniov 69), Voronin (Milevskyi 60).
France: Mandanda - Reveillere, Kaboul, Sakho (Abidal 76), Evra, Cabaye (Martin 76), M'Vila, Matuidi (Diaby 76), Remy (Ribery 64), Gameiro (Benzema 64), Menez (Malouda 64).

Tuesday, June 7

June 7 - Melbourne
Australia 0
Serbia 0
Att: 28,149. **Ref:** Tojo (Jap)
Australia: Federici - Neill (McKain 58), Ognenovski, Zullo (Troisi 46), Wilkshire (Williams 58), McKay, Jedinak (Kilkenny 74), Emerton (Vidosic 58), Valeri, Thompson (Kruse 66), Holman.
Serbia: Kahriman - Tomovic (Bisevac 75), Obradovic, Rajkovic (Subotic 65), Vilotic, Petrovic, D Stankovic (Jovanovic 83), Kuzmanovic (Trivunovic 65), Ljajic (Despotovic 65), Tosic (Miric 90), Damjanovic.

June 7 - Graz
Austria 3 (Dibon 75, Harnik 81, pen 90+4)
Latvia 1 (Mihadjuks 49)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,500. **Ref:** Evans (Wal)
Austria: Gratzel - Fuchs (Schrammel 90), Ortlechner, Dibon, Klein, Alaba (Drazan 90), Baumgartlinger (Royer 62), Kulovits, Junuzovic (Weber 90), Harnik, Kienast (Hoffer 62).
Latvia: Vanins - Mihadjuks, Klava, Krjauklis, Lazdins, Ivanovs, Gauracs (Pereplotkins 71), Cauna (Tarasovs 79), Zigajevs (Turkovs 86), Rugins, Rudnevs (Romanovs 90+5). *Sent off: Mihadjuks 88min, Vanins 90+3min, Klava 90+7min.*

June 7 - Sao Paulo
Brazil 1 (Fred 22)
Romania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Pezzotta (Arg)
Brazil: Victor - Maicon, Lucio (Luisao 71), David Luiz, Andre Santos, Sandro (Lucas Leiva 60), Elias, Jadson, Robinho (Lucas Silva 67), Fred (Ronaldo 31; Nilmar 46), Neymar (Thiago Neves 76).
Romania: Tatarusanu (Pantilimon 67) - Rapa, Papp, Gardos, Latovlevici, Torje, Muresan (Alexa 80), Bourceanu (Giurgiu 66), Sanmartean (Alexe 53), Marica (Zicu 72), Surdu (Tanase 46).

June 7 - New York
Ecuador 1 (Erazo 58)
Greece 1 (Tziolis 15)
HT: 0-1
Ecuador: Banguera - Reasco, Erazo, Checa, W Ayovi, Noboa (Castillo 74), Mendez (Calderon 83), Saritama (Minda 67), Arroyo, Benitez, J Ayovi (N Mina 86).
Greece: Kotsolis - Vyntra, Moras, K Papadopoulos, Maniatis (Spyropoulos 89), Fotakis (Katsouranis 78), Kafes (Karagounis 63), Tziolis, Kone (Fetfatzidis 63), Christodoulopoulos (Ninis 63), Mitroglou (Athanasiadis 64).

June 7 - Franceville
Gabon 0
Gambia 1 (Demba)
HT: 0-0

June 7 - Liege, Belgium
Italy 0
Republic of Ireland 2 (Andrews 36, Cox 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 21,516. **Ref:** Gumienny (Blg)
Italy: Viviano - Cassani, Gamberini, Chiellini, Criscito (Balzaretti 66), Marchisio, Pirlo (Palombo 46), Nocerino (Giovinco 58), Montolivo, Rossi (Matri 46), Pazzini (Gilardino 58).
Republic of Ireland: Forde - McShane, St Ledger, O'Dea (Kelly 83), Ward (Delaney 90+4), Coleman, Andrews, Foley (Whelan 58), S Hunt, Keogh (Treacy 74), Long (Cox 58).

June 7 - Oslo
Norway 1 (Gamst Pedersen 84)
Lithuania 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 12,945. **Ref:** Attwell (Eng)
Norway: Jarstein - Ruud, Waehler, Hangeland, J A Riise (Parr 81), B H Riise (Hogli 59), Hauger (Nordtveit 46), Jenssen (Brenne 46), Gamst Pedersen, Abdellaoue (Braaten 46), Huseklepp.
Lithuania: Setkus - D Cesnauskis, Klimavicius, Kijanskas, Radavicius, Panka (Leimonas 71), Pilibaitis, E Cesnauskis (Kavaliauskas 58), Savenas (Galkevicius 61), Papsys, Labukas (Astrauskas 77).

Triple...Pavlyuchenko

SPAIN

Del Bosque is the best

World Cup-winner Vicente Del Bosque is officially Spain's most successful coach of all time after the 3-0 win against Venezuela gave him his 39th success since succeeding Luis Aragones in 2008.

He has now overtaken his predecessor's record for the most victories in charge of the national side and it has taken Del Bosque just 44 games to better the previous best mark.

David Villa, Pedro and Xabi Alonso were all on target against the South Americans, while forward Manu – who has just moved from Getafe to Sevilla – won his first cap.

SWEDEN

Rivals thrashed

A Zlatan Ibrahimovic hat-trick and a goal apiece from Kim Kallstrom and Emir Bahrami gave Sweden a 5-0 win against Finland – their biggest victory over their rivals for 21 years.

VIETNAM

Gotz gets the job

Former Hertha Berlin and 1860 Munich coach Falko Gotz has taken charge of the national side.

26 USA's unbeaten run of games at the Gold Cup which was ended by Panama's 2-1 victory

June 7 - Luque
Paraguay 0
Bolivia 0
Att: 15,000. **Ref:** Lopes (Bra)
Paraguay: Villar (D Barreto 57) - Vera, Da Silva, Alcaraz, Torres, E Barreto (Gaona 65), N Ortigoza (Acuna 85), V Caceres, Estigarribia (Samudio 70), Barrios (Santander 65), Santa Cruz (Martinez 65).
Bolivia: Arias - Alvarez, Raldes, Ronald Rivero, L Gutierrez, Robles, R Garcia (Chavez 55), Flores, Campos (Cardozo 75), Rojas (Saucedo 86), Martins (Pedriel 78).

June 7 - Salzburg, Austria
Russia 0
Cameroon 0
Russia: Malafeev - Shishkin, A Berezutsky, V Berezutsky (Burlak 46), Yanbaev, Bilyaletdinov (Torbinsky 76), Sheshukov (Semshov 46), Glushakov, Dzagoev, Ryazantsev (Zhirkov 55), Pogrebnyak.
Cameroon: N'Dy Assembe - Angbwa (Bassong 46), Bedimo, N'Koulou (Abouna 46), Chedjou, Mbia, Ndame (Enoh 46), Aboubakar (Ngako 46), Choupo-Moting (Nguemo 60), Moukandjo, Eto'o (Webo 46).

June 7 - Singapore
Singapore 4 (Qiu Li pen 13, 19, Shi Jiayi 30, Duric 49)
Maldives 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 2,166

June 7 - Jeonju
South Korea 2 (Ji Dong-won 11, Koo Ja-cheol 90+1)
Ghana 1 (Gyan 63)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,271
South Korea: Jung Sung-ryong - Cha Du-ri (Kim Jae-sung 76), Lee Jung-soo, Hong Jeong-ho, Kim Young-kwon (Park Won-jae 89), Ki Sung-yeung, Lee Chung-yong (Lee Keun-ho 54), Kim Jung-woo (Koo Ja-cheol 60), Lee Yong-rae (Kim Bo-kyung 88), Ji Dong-won, Park Chu-young (Nam Tae-hee 82).
Ghana: Kingson - Paintsil, Jonathan Mensah, Vorsah, Opare (D Addy 54), Agyemang-Badu (L Addy 88), Annan, K Asamoah (Adiyiah 57), Muntari (D Boateng 64), Opoku (Clottey 75), Gyan.

June 7 - Puerto La Cruz
Venezuela 0
Spain 3 (Villa 5, Pedro 20, Xabi Alonso 45)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 36,000. **Ref:** Buckley (Per)
Venezuela: Vega - Rosales (A Gonzalez 89), Perozo, Lucena, Cichero, Rincon, C Gonzalez (Meza 65), Seijas (Di Giorgi 46), Orozco (Arango 46), Maldonado (Fedor 46), Moreno (Guerra 72).
Spain: Valdes (Casillas 89) - Iraola, Marchena, Albiol, Arbeloa (Capdevila 63), Busquets, Xabi Alonso (Cazorla 46), Iniesta (Silva 46), Pedro, Llorente (Fernando Torres 63), Villa (Del Moral 46).

Wednesday, June 8

June 8 - Guiyang
China 2 (Deng Zhuoxiang 37, Gao Lin 40)
North Korea 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 27,000
China: Zhang Lie - Rong Hao, Wang Qiang, Li Xuepeng (Feng Xiaoting 74), Deng Zhuoxiang (Yu Hanchao 81), Liu Jianye (Lu Peng 74), Gao Lin (Yang Xu 60), Yang Hao, Qu Bo (Feng Renliang 46), Zheng Zhi (Liu Yu 60), Yu Hai.
North Korea: Ri Myong-guk - Pak Nam-chol (Pak Song-chol 54), Ri Kwang-chon, An Jong-ho (Ryang Yong-gi 23), Ri Chol-myong (An Yong-hak 17), Jong Il-gwan, Jon Kwang-ik, Pak Nam-chol, Jong Su-hyok (Pak Song-chol 43), Ri Kwang-hyok, Jang Myong-il (Choe Kum-chol 65).

June 8 - Montevideo
Uruguay 1 (Suarez 82)
Holland 1 (Kuyt 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pittana (Arg)
*Uruguay 4-3 on pens**
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano (Victorino 78), Godin, Caceres, Perez (Eguren 62), Arevalo, Cavani, Forlan (Hernandez 77), Ramirez (Lodeiro 46), Suarez (A Pereira 84).
Holland: Krul - Boulahrouz, Heitinga, Mathijsen (Bruma 46), Pieters, N De Jong (Maduro 64), Strootman (Schaars 60), Kuyt (Elia 90+2), Afellay, Huntelaar (L De Jong 80), Van Persie.
**The teams were competing for the Copa Confraternidad (Fellowship Cup)*

Thursday, June 9

June 9 - Warsaw
Poland 0
France 1 (Jodlowiec og 12)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 31,000. **Ref:** Kuipers (Hol)
Poland: Szczesny - Piszczek, Wojtkowiak, Jodlowiec, Wawrzyniak, Blaszczykowski (Pawel Brozek 87), Dudka, Obraniak (Pawlowski 88), Murawski, A Mierzejewski (Matusczyk 80), R Lewandowski.
France: Carrasso - Sagna, Kaboul (Rami 28), Abidal, Evra, Cabaye (Diaby 46), A Diarra (M'Vila 46), Martin, Valbuena (Malouda 73), Hoarau (Gameiro 79), N'Zogbia (Remy 73).

Saturday, June 11

June 11 - Asuncion
Paraguay 2 (Haedo Valdez 2, Santa Cruz 29)
Romania 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Roman (Bra)
Paraguay: Villar - L Cardozo, Da Silva, Benegas, Samudio, E Barreto (Marecos 76), C Riveros, Acuna (Molinas 9), Martinez (Benitez 77), Haedo Valdez (Perez 46), Santa Cruz (Zeballos 63).
Romania: Pantilimon - Rapa, Papp (Oros 46), Gardos, Latovlevici, Torje (Antal 84), Muresan (Alexa 61), Giurgiu (Bourceanu 46), Tanase (Surdu 73), Zicu (Sanmartean 46), Alexe.

Saturday, June 18

June 18 - Kota Bharu
Malaysia 2 (Zainal 28, Bakhtiar 55)
Myanmar 0
HT: 1-0

Sunday, June 19

June 19 - The Valley
Anguilla 0
US Virgin Islands 0
Ref: Burton (Agu)
Anguilla: Liddie - Jeffers, Hawley, A Richardson, Bailey, G Connor, Rodgers, K Richardson, Abbot, Brooks, Griffith.
US Virgin Islands: Claxton - Van Gurp, Smith, Augustus, George, Schuster, Villafana, Lesmond, Beharry, Laurencin, Browne.

June 19 - Santiago
Chile 4 (Fernandez 21, Ponce 41, Suazo pen 45, Sanchez 50)
Estonia 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Vasquez (Uru)
Chile: Bravo (Pinto 69) - P Contreras, Ponce, Jara, Isla (Fierro 74), Estrada, Carmona (Valdivia 60), Beausejour (F Gutierrez 76), Fernandez (Jimenez 67), Sanchez (Paredes 71), Suazo.
Estonia: Meerits - Sisov (Morozov 81), Palatu, Reintam, Kruglov, Kams (Veis 64), Mosnikov (Anier 76), Tenno (Indermitte 64), S Puri, Luts (Peitre 64), Tamm (Prosa 64).

Monday, June 20

June 20 - Buenos Aires
Argentina 4 (Lavezzi 6, Messi 43, Aguero 75, Tevez 90)
Albania 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 21,000. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Argentina: Romero - Zanetti, N Burdisso, G Milito, Rojo (Zabaleta 46), Banega, Mascherano, Biglia (Gago 46), Lavezzi (Aguero 61), Messi, Di Maria (Tevez 46).
Albania: Beqaj (Hidi 73) - Veliu, Lila, Vrapi (Arapi 81), Vangjeli, Bulku, Allmuca (Lika 58), Vila (Hyka 46), Bakaj (Sallaj 67), Muzaka, Kapllani (Vajushi 67).

Thursday, June 23

June 23 - Rivera
Uruguay 3 (Caceres 12, Reintam og 55, Lodeiro 71)
Estonia 0
HT: 1-0
Uruguay: Muslera - M Pereira, Lugano, Victorino (Coates 60), Caceres, Perez (Gargano 60), Arevalo (Eguren 85), Lodeiro (A Gonzalez 72), Suarez (Hernandez 72), Forlan (Abreu 82), Cavani.
Estonia: Londak - Sisov, Palatu, Reintam (Morozov 62), Kruglov, Kams (Veis 88), Tenno (Mosnikov 62), S Puri, Luts (Peitre 64), Anier (Prosa 64), Tamm (Indermitte 80).

June 23 - Asuncion
Paraguay 0
Chile 0
Ref: Oliveira (Bra)
Paraguay: D Barreto - Da Silva (Alcaraz 65), M Caceres (Vera 65), Veron, Torres, C Riveros, E Barreto (Perez 75), Estigarribia, V Caceres (N Ortigoza 40), Santa Cruz (Haedo Valdez 60), Santander (Zeballos 60).
Chile: Bravo - P Contreras, Ponce, Jara (Vidal 75), Fierro (Meneses 62), Medel (Silva 75), Estrada (Carmona 82), Beausejour, Jimenez (F Gutierrez 70), Rubio (Munoz 64), Paredes.

FRIENDLY FIXTURES

05.07.11	Solomon Islands v Vanuatu (Honiara)
06.07.11	Kuwait v Oman (Beirut)
	Malawi v Namibia
07.07.11	Solomon Islands v Vanuatu (Honiara)
09.07.11	Lebanon v Oman (Beirut)
10.07.11	Maldives v India
13.07.11	Syria v Oman (Beirut)
17.07.11	Iran v Madagascar (Tehran)
	Qatar v India
	UAE v Lebanon (Al Ain City)
18.07.11	Singapore v Laos (Singapore)
27.07.11	Vanuatu v Solomon Islands (Port Vila)
30.07.11	Vanuatu v Solomon Islands (Port Vila)
10.08.11	Albania v Montenegro (Tirana)
	Austria v Slovakia (Klagenfurt)
	Azerbaijan v Macedonia (Baku)
	Belarus v Bulgaria
	Bolivia v Panama (Santa Cruz)
	Bosnia-Herzegovina v Greece
	Cyprus v Moldova
	England v Holland (London)
	France v Chile (Montpellier)
	Germany v Brazil (Stuttgart)
	Hungary v Iceland
	Iran v Venezuela (Tehran)
	Italy v Spain (Bari)
	Japan v South Korea (Sapporo)
	Latvia v Finland (Riga)
	Liechtenstein v Switzerland (Vaduz)
	Lithuania v Armenia (Kaunas)
	Norway v Czech Republic (Oslo)
	Poland v Georgia
	Portugal v Luxembourg
	Republic of Ireland v Croatia (Dublin)
	Romania v Argentina (Bucharest)
	Russia v Serbia (Moscow)
	Scotland v Denmark (Glasgow)
	Senegal v Morocco (Dakar)
	Slovenia v Belgium (Ljubljana)
	Tahiti v Solomon Islands
	Ukraine v Sweden (Kharkiv)
13.08.11	Tahiti v Solomon Islands

UNDER-20 WORLD CUP

In Colombia

Group stage match schedule

Group A

30.07.11	Mali v South Korea (Bogota)
	Colombia v France (Bogota)
02.08.11	France v South Korea (Bogota)
	Colombia v Mali (Bogota)
05.08.11	France v Mali (Cali)
	Colombia v South Korea (Bogota)

Group B

30.07.11	Cameroon v New Zealand (Cali)
	Portugal v Uruguay (Cali)
02.08.11	Uruguay v New Zealand (Cali)
	Portugal v Cameroon (Cali)
05.08.11	Portugal v New Zealand (Cali)
	Uruguay v Cameroon (Bogota)

Group C

31.07.11	Costa Rica v Spain (Manizales)
	Australia v Ecuador (Manizales)
03.08.11	Ecuador v Spain (Manizales)
	Australia v Costa Rica (Manizales)
06.08.11	Ecuador v Costa Rica (Pereira)
	Australia v Spain (Manizales)

Group D

31.07.11	Nigeria v Guatemala (Armenia)
	Croatia v Saudi Arabia (Armenia)
03.08.11	Saudi Arabia v Guatemala (Armenia)
	Croatia v Nigeria (Armenia)
06.08.11	Saudi Arabia v Nigeria (Pereira)
	Croatia v Guatemala (Armenia)

Group E

29.07.11	Austria v Panama (Cartagena)
	Brazil v Egypt (Barranquilla)
01.08.11	Egypt v Panama (Barranquilla)
	Brazil v Austria (Barranquilla)
04.08.11	Brazil v Panama (Barranquilla)
	Egypt v Austria (Cartagena)

Group F

29.07.11	England v North Korea (Medellin)
	Argentina v Mexico (Medellin)
01.08.11	Mexico v North Korea (Medellin)
	Argentina v England (Medellin)
04.08.11	Mexico v England (Cartagena)
	Argentina v North Korea (Medellin)

Top 2 in each group and the 4 3rd-placed teams with the best record qualify for 1st knockout round

AFRICA CAF CHAMPIONS LEAGUE 2011

KEY DATES

Group games start
July 15, 2011
Group games end
September 18, 2011

The group competition in this year's African Champions League has a familiar look about it, even though the last eight is without defending champions Mazembe Englebert, who had high hopes of an unprecedented third successive Champions League success but were kicked out of this year's tournament after being found guilty of using an improperly registered player in the early knockout stage.

Mazembe's mistake allowed a back door entry to the group competition for **Wydad Casablanca**, who had been beaten over two legs by the Congolese side in the final qualifying round in May.

Wydad's participation pushed to six the number of former African champions in the business end of this year's event. The other two participants are both past runners-up, setting up the prospect of a highly competitive second half of the competition.

The top two in each group go through to the two-leg semi-finals (which will be played in October) and, thereafter, the two-leg Final (in November) with a place at the Club World Cup in Japan at the end of the year at stake.

After Mazembe's appearance in last year's Club World Cup Final in Abu Dhabi against Internazionale, winning Africa's top club prize now has added meaning, with the chance to take on the likes of Barcelona and Santos in December a huge incentive.

Challenge...Enyimba's Josiah Maduabuchi (left) tussles with Davy Diafouka of Congo's St Michel de Ouenze in the preliminary round

Should Cairo giants Al Ahly succeed this year they will extend their record number of wins in the tournament to seven

Coton Sport of Cameroon and Sudan's **Al Hilal**, the only sides left in the tournament not to have won the title, are paired in Group A along with **Enyimba** of Nigeria and **Raja Casablanca**.

Wydad, who appointed former Switzerland international Michel Decastel as their new coach after securing a place in the last eight, are in an all-Arab Group B along with **Al Ahly** of Egypt, **Esperance** from Tunisia and **Mouloudia Alger**, who are making their debut in the group competition but won the tournament back in 1976 when it was run on a knockout basis. Since then, they have taken part in the continent's top club competition only five times, including this year.

Last year's runners-up Esperance will carry the mantle of marginal favourites, but Al Ahly are always a force, having re-hired Manuel Jose as coach and boasting a vastly experienced side.

Should the Cairo giants succeed this year, they will extend to seven their record number of successes in the competition. Their last four Champions League titles have come under the tutelage of Jose, whose magical touch has seen Ahly come from behind in recent weeks to set themselves up for an eighth successive Egyptian title.

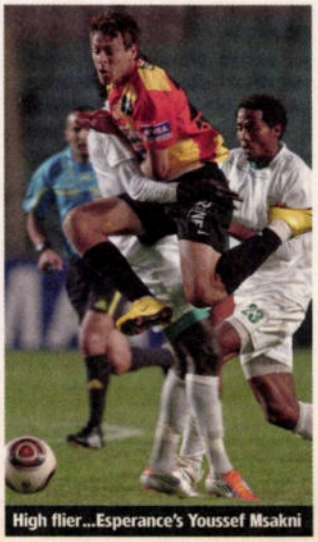
Raja Casablanca's convincing march to this year's Moroccan league crown suggests that they will be the side to beat in Group A. They have been busy in the transfer market since the close of their domestic season, looking to bolster their squad for the Champions League campaign, and have handed Mohamed Fakhir, former national coach of Morocco, a contract extension.

Nigeria's Enyimba are perennial challengers but one of their best weapons, the gruelling nature of the trip to Aba to play them in their backyard, could be lost as the Confederation of African Football has placed the club on a final warning and under the threat of suspension for the hostility of their fans and the repeated poor treatment of visiting teams.

Crowd trouble led to Esperance having to host matches away from Tunis in the preliminary rounds and Al Ahly will play their first group game against Wydad on July 17 behind closed doors in Cairo.

Mark Gleeson

Catch me if you can...Al Hilal's Felix Sunzu finds a way through against Club Africain



High flier...Esperance's Youssef Msakni

AUSTRIA
Hooligans spoil end of season

Sturm Graz upset the odds by winning the Austrian Bundesliga for only the third time – and for the first time in 12 years – with Salzburg finishing second and again missing out on their dream of playing in the Champions League.

A 2-1 win over Wacker Innsbruck gave Sturm the title, while Salzburg won 4-2 at Austria Vienna to snatch second spot from their opponents - which was scant consolation for a miserable season.

Salzburg have yet to play in Europe's top competition since their takeover in 2005 by energy drink manufacturer Red Bull, who have injected huge amounts of cash into the club but also alienated supporters by changing the team's colours and trying to wipe out the previous 62 years of their history.

Unfortunately, the 2010-11 season will probably be most remembered for the pitch invasion which forced the Rapid Vienna-Austria Vienna derby to be suspended after less than half an hour in the penultimate round of games.

There has been a long history of clashes between the two set of fans at railway stations and other locations around Vienna, but this was the first time the country's top derby had been called off.

Around 200 Rapid fans, many masked, invaded the pitch in the 26th minute at the 19,500-capacity Hanappi stadium after the visitors had gone 2-0 ahead. Referee Thomas Einwaller waited for half an hour before abandoning the match and Austria were awarded a 3-0 win the following day.

"Now the last bit of good reputation Austrian football had in the world is ruined," said Einwaller.

Rapid Vienna president Rudolf Edlinger added: "It's the darkest hour in my decades with Rapid.

"I'm deeply upset, shocked and sad. I want to apologise, especially to the Austria players who were physically threatened."

However, Edlinger has been criticised over the years for not being strict enough with the club's hard-core fans who have a reputation for violence and extreme right-wing tendencies.

Vienna police said 40 people would be prosecuted, while Rapid belatedly promised stronger measures to keep out troublemakers.

It was later discovered that supporters from the notorious Panathinaikos faction Gate 13, who enjoy close ties with Rapid fans, were involved in the pitch invasion.

Plenty of politicians were happy to have their say. Sports minister Norbert Darabos argued that troublemakers should get life bans from stadiums and said he would raise the issue in parliament, while interior minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner suggested laws should be introduced to ban fans in stadiums from disguising their faces, and the Green Party wanted points deductions for teams whose fans cause trouble.

But a Rapid Vienna fan club said it favoured the invasion, saying it was justified as demands for better performances have failed to have any impact and that it was "our last cry for help". They added that a majority of supporters of the club, Austria's most popular, were not satisfied with the team's displays this season.

Rapid eventually finished fifth and missed out on a place in Europe in a season that saw the club fire coach Peter Pacult shortly after he was spotted sharing a table with Red Bull CEO Dietrich Mateschitz at an upmarket Vienna restaurant, described by club officials as "a massive breach of trust".

Pacult, who had been at Rapid for five years, said: "How stupid would I have to be debating such things in such an environment? There would be other ways to do so."

Shortly after being fired, he was offered a job at RB Leipzig - a fourth division German club owned by Red Bull.

Salzburg, meanwhile, fired Huub Stevens and replaced him with fellow Dutch coach Ricardo Moniz following a season in which they lost in the final round of the Champions League qualifiers and exited the Austria Cup at the hands of third division Blau-Weiss Linz. Ried were the eventual Cup winners, beating Austria Lustenau 2-0 in the Final.

Brian Homewood

For final league table, see page 107

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
ZLATKO JUNUZOVIC (Austria Vienna)
Voted the season's outstanding performer by both the league's managers and supporters.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
DANIEL ROYER (Ried)
Midfielder who made his professional debut at the start of the season, becoming a regular for the Cup winners and ending the campaign by coming on as a substitute against Germany for his first cap.

COACH OF THE YEAR
FRANCO FODA (Sturm Graz)
Took over the first team in 2006, after four years with the amateur side, and has now won trophies in successive seasons, adding the league to last year's Cup win.

Onwards and upwards...Foda

Thin black line...riot police confront Rapid Vienna fans to ensure that no more invade the pitch during the derby with Austria Vienna

Champions...the title goes to Graz

BULGARIA

Dubious decisions overshadow season

Despite early season upheavals Litex Lovech went on to retain the title, but the club's fourth league championship was overshadowed by allegations of collusion with match officials.

Last year's title-winning coach Angel Chervenkov left after just one game, while midfielder Ivelin Popov joined Turkish side Gaziantepspor, and after just three wins in their opening seven league games Litex found themselves in fourth place, five points behind early leaders Levski Sofia.

Defeat by Zilina of Slovakia in the Champions League preliminaries and to Debrecen of Hungary in the Europa League ended all continental interest, but former CSKA Sofia boss Luboslav Penev eventually turned things around and the side embarked on a run of 13 consecutive victories to equal CSKA's record, set in 2002.

However, critics were quick to highlight the influence of Litex owner Grisha Ganchev, who is an executive committee member of the Bulgarian Football Union. CSKA called for an extraordinary congress of the BFU after referee Stefan Spassov turned down two penalty appeals against Litex in Sofia, while Stanislav Todorov's handling of Litex's home game against Levski was also questioned after a full-scale brawl broke out and he later rejected a penalty appeal against Litex in the last minute.

Sofia's two other top-flight sides, Slavia and Lokomotiv, also felt hard done by in games against the champions, with Lokomotiv president Nikolay Gigov even calling for the resignation of Kostadin Kostadinov, the chief of the referees' commission.

Litex lost just one game on their way to the title, going down 2-0 away to Levski, for who striker Garra Dembele was the revelation of the season. Born in Paris to Malian parents, he scored 36 goals in all competitions - including 26 in 24 league games. Strong and in great physical condition, the summer signing from Lokomotiv Plovdiv helped himself to four hat-tricks - against Lokomotiv Sofia, Minyor Pernik, Pirin Blagoevgrad and Sliven - as Levski took second place, three points behind Litex. They cashed in when the season ended, selling him to Freiburg of Germany for £2million.

When Milen Radukanov took charge of CSKA the team were in ninth place. But the former Levski and CSKA defender changed the atmosphere in the dressing room and led his side to a 1-0 victory over Slavia in the Bulgarian Cup Final. They join Levski and fourth-placed Lokomotiv Sofia in the Europa League.

Next season will see the return of Botev Vratsa to the top flight after a break of 21 years, along with debutants Ludogorets Razgrad. Pirin were relegated to the third division for financial reasons.

Rumen Paytashev

For final league table, see page108

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
GARRA DEMBELE (Levski Sofia)
The Mali striker was the season's top scorer, averaging more than a goal a game in the league.

Four hat-tricks...Dembele

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
PLAMEN ILIEV (Levski Sofia)
The 19-year-old goalkeeper arrived from Vidima-Rakovski during the winter break and played with great confidence.

COACH OF THE SEASON
MILEN RADUKANOV (CSKA Sofia)
Took charge of a struggling side and led them to Cup success and third place in the league.

Open hostilities...Litex Lovech (in orange) and Levksi Sofia players get hot under the collar in a match which referee Todorov's performance was brought into question

CROATIA
Dinamo do the double again

Dinamo Zagreb dominated the domestic season once again, winning their sixth consecutive championship and adding the Croatian Cup to make it a total of 13 leagues, 11 Cups and seven doubles in the past 20 years.

However, despite their continuing trophy haul, all is not well in the Dinamo camp, with open hostility still raging between the supporters and executive vice-president Zdravko Mamic. A hard core of fans have been boycotting matches for years now – regardless of results and the team's ongoing successes – demanding the resignation of Mamic, who they believe, with his arrogant behaviour, has no right to lead a club they consider sacred.

A clash between Mamic and coach Vahid Halilhodzic, at half-time in the 1-0 win over Inter Zapresic with the title already wrapped up and just three league matches left to play, did little to help relations. The Bosnian boss resigned immediately after the game and the club will now be led in the second qualifying round of the new season's Champions League by former Croatia midfielder Krunoslav Jurcic.

Hajduk Split celebrated their centenary in February, but had another season to forget, finishing 17 points behind Dinamo and in second place for the fourth time in five seasons. Since becoming the first Croatian club to list on the stock exchange, they have cleared enormous debts but stability has been hard to achieve and there has been a non-stop merry-go-round of officials and coaches. In April, 32-year-old Hrvoje Males was elected president by fans and in May he made former Bulgaria playmaker Krassimir Balakov the club's fourth coach in less than a year.

Four years after going bankrupt and following three consecutive promotions, RNK Split were the big surprise of the season. Back in the top flight for the first time in 49 years, they finished third, just two points behind their far-bigger city rivals Hajduk. The club's president is controversial building mogul Slaven Zuzul, who has been arrested three times over suspicions of corruption in the construction of a highway.

Joining the two Split clubs in the Europa League qualifiers will be Varazdin who, although they finished a lowly 11th, gained their place by virtue of reaching the Croatian Cup Final, where they lost 8-2 on aggregate to Dinamo.

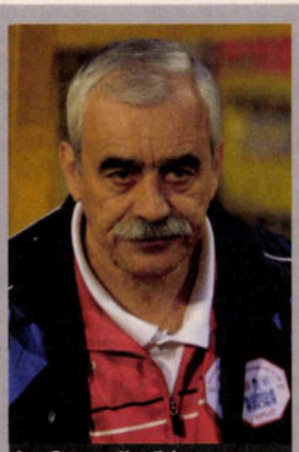
Zdravko Reic

For final league table, see page108

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
SAMMIR (Dinamo Zagreb)
Brazil-born midfielder who has expressed a desire to play for Croatia. Unfortunately, a little too keen on partying and was caught driving while over the limit in May.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MATEO KOVACIC (Dinamo Zagreb)
Became the league's youngest debutant and goalscorer, at 16 years and 198 days, in November.

COACH OF THE SEASON
IVAN KATALINIC (RNK Split)
Former Hajduk goalkeeper and coach who led their little city neighbours into Europe.


Into Europe...Katalinic

Ticker-tape welcome...Dinamo Zagreb players and staff celebrate clinching the club's 13th Croatian league title in 20 years

CZECH REPUBLIC
Centenary celebration

Viktoria Plzen were the revelation of the Czech season, scoring 70 goals in 30 games en route to a first-ever title to mark their 100th anniversary.

Coached by Pavel Vrba, who led Zilina to the Slovak championship in 2007, Plzen set out their stall with an 11-game winning run, which included a 1-0 win at Sparta Prague in August, and had opened up a 12-point lead over main challengers Sparta by mid-October, before a 4-3 loss to Mlada Boleslav ended their unbeaten streak. Further points were dropped in the last two games before the winter break – a 1-1 draw with Liberec and a 1-0 loss to Bohemians 1905 – allowing Sparta to close the gap to four points.

By the time the top two met again in March, a 2-2 draw with lowly Slovacko had cut Plzen's lead to just two points. However, another 1-0 victory over their wealthier rivals meant Plzen only had to hold their nerve to seal the title.

Dropped points against Slavia Prague and Brno prolonged the drama, but Sparta's defeat by Baumit Jablonec saw the underdogs take the title with a 3-1 home win over Banik Ostrava in the penultimate game of the season.

For a squad occasionally dubbed "Sparta Prague B" because of their reliance on their cast-offs, it was a remarkable achievement. Veteran playmaker Pavel Horvath, who moved to Plzen from Sparta in 2007, was central to Viktoria's success, while ex-Sparta players Jan Rezek, midfielder Milan Petrzela and full-back David Limbersky were also all involved.

Plzen's success pushed last season's runners-up Jablonec down to third, but it was another impressive campaign from Frantisek Komnacky's side, who had the league's top scorer in David Lafata, and, like Sparta, qualify for the Europa League.

Fourth-placed Sigma Olomouc missed out on Europe in the league and Czech Cup, where they lost on penalties to Mlada Boleslav in a Final marred by crowd trouble. The first major trophy in Boleslav's 109-year history came despite a change of coaches the week before the Final, with Karel Stanner, punished for poor league form, making way for caretaker Ladislav Minar, Boleslav's sporting director.

If Plzen's success was a football fairy tale, the season endured by Slavia Prague, champions in 2008 and 2009, was like a nightmare.

Having gambled, unsuccessfully, on qualification for the 2009-10 Champions League, Slavia racked up debts of £8million, with almost half owed to ENIC Group, the British company that controlled the club until December 2007, plus a further £350,000 owed in unpaid wages.

ENIC chased its money in the English courts for much of the season, threatening to push Slavia into insolvency, and the campaign ended with the Czech FA temporarily withholding Slavia's professional licence – a move that would have forced the club to play in the third tier next season if players had continued to go unpaid.

Previously concealed by an opaque ownership structure, little-known board member Antonin Franc announced that he owned a majority of the club and a desperate search for a buyer ensued. Eventually, the Natland Group, a Cyprus-registered investment firm controlled by two companies registered in the Seychelles, bought the club from Franc for a nominal fee and a professional licence was granted.

Despite the chaos, coach Michal Petrous, appointed as Karel Jarolim's replacement in September, somehow guided Slavia to a respectable ninth place. But in a self-defeating move, anger at the lack of transparency surrounding the club's ownership led to crowd trouble at the first leg of the Czech Cup semi-final against Olomouc, prompting the game to be abandoned. A 3-0 walkover win for Olomouc effectively ended Slavia's hopes of winning the Cup and potentially qualifying for next season's Europa League.

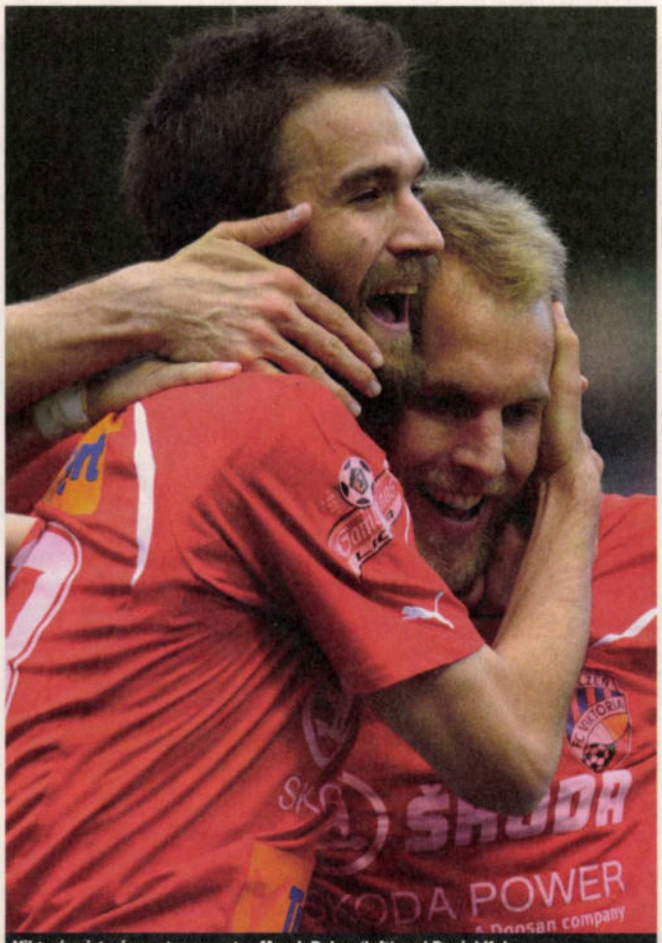
Ostrava, third last season, also had a season to forget. Faced with the loss of several key players over the summer, coach Miroslav Koubek struggled to piece together a team from a raft of new signings and left by mutual consent in October. His replacement, Karol Marko, fared little better, however, and Banik only narrowly avoided relegation.

At the bottom, promoted Ustinad Labem's last-place finish surprised nobody, but the relegation of Zbrojovka Brno, the second city's only major club, was less predictable, even taking into account a lack of transfer funds and a glut of unwanted players. Despite poor results, coach Karel Vecera kept his job until mid-April when he was replaced by former striker Rene Wagner.

The promotion of one of Czech football's most famous names, the revived Dukla Prague, and Viktoria Zizkov means there will be five teams from the capital in the top flight next season.

Sam Beckwith

For final league table, see page 108



Viktoria victorious...team-mates Marek Bakos (left) and Daniel Kolar

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
PAVEL HORVATH
(Viktoria Plzen)
The 36-year-old playmaker had one of his best seasons with the title winners, prompting calls for him to be returned to the Czech national side.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
LEONARD KWEUKE
(Sparta Prague)
With 14 goals in 27 games, the 23-year-old Cameroonian striker ensured Sparta's title challenge continued despite the sale of top scorer Wilfried Bony to Vitesse Arnhem in January.

Hot shot...Kweuke (left)

COACH OF THE SEASON
PAVEL VRBA (Viktoria Plzen)
After winning the Czech Cup the previous season, the 47-year-old pulled off an even more impressive feat in leading the unfashionable west Bohemian club to their first league title in some style.

DENMARK
Wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen

What a way to go...Gronkjaer crowned his final season by being hurled into the air by his title-winning Copenhagen team-mates

The 2010-11 Superliga was decided almost as soon as it had begun. While champions Copenhagen started with a formidable unbeaten streak that would reach 19 games, their only truly ambitious rivals, OB Odense, imploded inside a few weeks.

OB entered the campaign full of optimism, with coach Lars Olsen, captain of Denmark's winning team at Euro 92, claiming this was the year they would shake off their "always the bridesmaid" tag. But they had a patchy start, lagged well behind Copenhagen and Olsen was gone before the end of September.

It was effectively a declaration that Copenhagen again had no challengers and they cantered to an eighth title in 11 years, confirming their utter domination of the Danish scene. Records galore fell along the way as they clocked up the most points (81), the most goals scored (77) and lost only twice – away to OB and Midtjylland long after it could have made any impact.

Such was their dominance – thanks to striker Dame N'Doye, veteran winger Jesper Gronkjaer in his final season, captain William Kvist and Brazilian playmaker Claudemir – for the first time a Danish club could also challenge hard in the Champions League. Copenhagen played two fine games against Barcelona, drawing at home, and reached the knockout stage where ring-rustiness from the winter break brought defeat by Chelsea.

It was the classic scenario for mid-ranking European leagues, as the champions gain entry to the extra riches of the Champions League then assert even greater dominance at home due to superior financial power.

Thankfully for Denmark, Copenhagen's ongoing success in Europe has now handed the nation two Champions League places – which gave huge spice to the most interesting race in the Superliga: the battle for second spot.

There were three contenders – OB, Brondby and Midtjylland – with each club having good spells. OB replaced Olsen with a caretaker in Uffe Pedersen, but he lasted less than two months before the club surprisingly turned to the little-known Henrik Clausen. His career was cut short by injury at the age of 19 and he had spent 16 years as youth and reserve-team coach at OB, with a similar short spell at Vejle.

Despite his lack of top-flight experience, Clausen found the alchemy to guide OB to second place, four points clear of Brondby after a strong closing run of games. A 3-0 victory at home to Copenhagen proved the catalyst and instilled belief in the side.

For Brondby – once the superclub of Denmark, as dominant 15 to 20 years ago as Copenhagen are now – it was another huge disappointment. Despite this, veteran boss Per Bjerregaard resisted the temptation of an offer of new money from a hedge fund, saying Brondby did not want to succeed through "financial doping".

Staying in the Superliga proved to be a trial for many. More than half the division were in danger until the last couple of games, and promoted Lyngby notably avoided going straight back down despite having no money to spend on players. On a dramatic final day AaB Aalborg, managed by another Euro 92 hero, Kent Nielsen, stayed up at the expense of Randers.

Esbjerg were also relegated, despite being only six points behind sixth-placed Nordsjaelland. In most seasons their 33 points would have been enough for safety.

In contrast there was a cakewalk for promotion from the second tier. Both the clubs relegated the previous season – AGF Aarhus and HB Koge – scampered back. Champions AGF were 20 points clear of third-placed Vejle.

Vejle's failure prompted the possibility that they might become the latest "fusion" club in Denmark by joining forces with Kolding, who were relegated to the third tier. Vejle were hoping to lure club legend Allan Simonsen back, but instead he agreed to join nearby Fredericia, who have Superliga ambitions of their own.

Jim Holden

For final league table, see page108

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
DAME N'DOYE (Copenhagen)
The 26-year-old Senegalese striker scored 25 goals and was a powerhouse both at home and in the Champions League.

NEWCOMER OF THE YEAR
MATHIAS "ZANKA" JORGENSEN (Copenhagen)
The classy 21-year-old central defender played his way into the Denmark side.

COACH OF THE YEAR
HENRIK CLAUSEN (OB Odense)
His intelligent leadership proved you don't always have to go for big-name reputations.

Surprise packet...Clausen

POLAND
Victory for foreign legion

Wisla Krakow's early exit from the preliminary rounds of the Europa League at the hands of Azerbaijani side Qarabag would ultimately have a dramatic effect on their season, with the defeat leading to the resignation of Henryk Kasperczak and the appointment of Robert Maaskant. With fellow Dutchman Stan Valckx also arriving as sporting director, Maaskant inspired his foreign-dominated squad to a 13th Polish title.

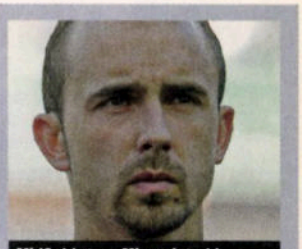
The most colourful character in the championship-winning side was one of the few Poles, Patryk Malecki, a 22-year-old striker who says: "I love scoring goals, but if a coach gives me defensive tactical tasks, I must accept it. I am here to help the team, not make trouble."

Unfortunately, trouble has a knack of finding him and during the derby clash with city rivals Cracovia, Malecki abused Burundi winger Saidi Ntibazonkiza and now faces an inquiry into racist behaviour. The Wisla supporters, however, adore Malecki and when he was suspended for the game against GKS Belchatow he stood among them and, with a microphone in his hand, conducted their chants.

The biggest surprise of the season were Slask Wroclaw, who replaced Ryszard Tarasiewicz with Orest Lenczyk as their coach in September with a brief to "rescue a team from relegation". After losing five of their opening seven league games, Lenczyk turned things around and took the team on a 14-match unbeaten run that saw them finish as runners-up and qualify for Europe for the first time since 1987. "We are so hungry for successes in Europe and I believe that our fans will be proud of us," says midfielder Sebastian Mila.

Joining them in the Europa League will be third-place Legia Warsaw – who also won the Polish Cup, beating Lech Poznan 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw – and Jagiellonia Bialystok, who finished fourth after leading the table by three points at one stage.

Having lost winger Kamil Grosicki to Turkish side Sivasspor during the winter break, Jagiellonia suffered a disastrous spring campaign and coach Michal Probierz offered to resign after a 2-0 defeat to Polonia Warsaw, with four games left, declaring: "I don't think I can do anything more with this team. It is the same as with a woman: you realise the moment when you should split up."



Midfield star...Mierzejewski

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
ADRIAN MIERZEJEWSKI
(Polonia Warsaw)
Skilful, creative midfielder who has made excellent progress since joining Polonia in 2009.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
MAOR MELIKSON
(Wisla Krakow)
Israeli midfielder who was a key player for the champions.

COACH OF THE SEASON
OREST LENCZYK
(Slask Wroclaw)
The oldest coach in the top flight, the 68-year-old took the relegation contenders to title challengers.

Lucky for some...captain Radoslaw Sobolewski leads the way as Wisla Krakow players celebrate their 13th Polish championship

However, the club refused to accept Probierz's decision and he stayed on to guide them to their best-ever finish.

The big disappointments of the season were Lech Poznan and Polonia Warsaw. The defending champions missed out on Europe by finishing only fifth but have still rewarded Spanish coach Jose Maria Bakero with a contract extension. He had started the season with Polonia – who were league leaders after three games with maximum points – until club owner Jozef Wojciechowski sacked him after their first defeat of the season. They ended the campaign in seventh.

Arka Gdynia and Polonia Bytom were relegated, while LKS Lodz and, for the first time, Podbeskidzie Bielsko-Biala join a top flight where attendances are booming. The construction and modernisation of stadiums ahead of Euro 2012 has meant a big increase in ground capacities – which in turn led to a 67 per cent rise in spectators. Lech had the highest average, with 19,094, while their home game against Legia attracted an Ekstraklasa season-best of 34,312.

Dariusz Kurowski

For final league table, see page 110

SERBIA
Partizan's four in a row

Derby duel...Red Star's Evandro (left) tackles Partizan midfielder Ilic during the April clash between Belgrade's top two teams

Partizan created history by claiming a fourth successive Serbian league title – and their 23rd national championship in all – finishing six points clear of Belgrade rivals Red Star.

As the Serbian club with the most stable financial situation – which was helped by reaching the Champions League group stage for a second time – Partizan always looked likely to dominate domestically, although at one point in the spring they did squander a five-point lead to allow Red Star to draw level. However, a 1-0 win in April's "Eternal Derby" reasserted Partizan's grip on top spot and they remained in front until the season's end.

And all this was achieved despite selling two of their best players to Chinese clubs during the winter break: Brazilian striker Cleo moved to Guangzhou for a reported £3.5million, while Guinea-Bissau playmaker Almami Moreira signed for Dalian Aerbin.

However, the momentum was retained with the loan acquisition of Ghanaian striker Prince Tagoe from Hoffenheim. His goals played a key role in the club's success, alongside notable contributions from defenders Stefan Savic and veteran Mladen Krstajic (who has now retired and becomes sports director), midfielders Radosav Petrovic, Sasa Ilic and Medo – a promising Sierra Leone international who arrived last summer from HJK Helsinki.

Red Star, forced to contend with a limited budget, changed coaches twice during the season, with former club legend Robert Prosinecki becoming the first Croat to coach in Serbia since the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Brazilian playmaker Evandro and on-loan Colombian winger Cristian Borja were the bright spots in a largely uninspiring season that also marked the 20th anniversary of the club's European Cup triumph.

Vojvodina beat Partizan twice to finish in third, but caused a scandal in their third meeting, in the Serbian Cup Final, by walking off the pitch after 83 minutes in protest at what they believed to be biased refereeing. Partizan, who were 2-1 ahead at the time, were awarded the victory and duly completed the double.

The FA's disciplinary committee sanctioned Vojvodina with a three-point deduction for next season, together with six-month bans for chairman Ratko Butorovic, coach Zoran Milinkovic and midfielder Nikola Lazetic, the first player to head for the tunnel.

The most pleasant surprise of the season was a fourth place for unfashionable Belgrade side Rad. Unfortunately, coach Marko Nikolic fell out with club boss Ranko Stojic at the end of the campaign and will not be at the helm as the club prepare to do battle in the Europa League alongside Red Star and Vojvodina. Once again, Partizan will take part in the qualifiers for the Champions League.

Vladimir Novak

For final league table, see page 110

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
CLEO
(Partizan)
Left for China in January but was still the league's best performer in a season where individual brilliance was at a premium.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
SLOBODAN MEDOJEVIC
(Vojvodina)
The 20-year-old midfielder's consistent performances helped earn him the captain's armband in the Serbia under-21 side.

COACH OF THE SEASON
ALEKSANDAR STANOJEVIC
(Partizan)
At 37, the youngest coach in the club's history, he guided his side to the Champions League group phase and did the double.

Top man...Partizan coach Stanojevic

SWITZERLAND
Long old season, same old story

The 2010 World Cup had barely finished before the Swiss Super League kicked off. And, once started, it seemed to drag on forever, lasting 10-and-a-half months – which is far too long to retain interest in a 10-team competition – until, almost inevitably, Basle clinched the title for the fifth time in eight seasons.

"Of course you're supposed to be a fair sportsman – 'congratulations to Basle, blah, blah, blah' – but no, I'm sorry, it makes me sick that they're champions," said Zurich's Ludovic Magnin in one of the season's few unpredictable moments.

This season's championship, rather like muzak in a shopping centre, was always around but with nobody paying any real attention. The two-month winter break seemed particularly pointless, with deep snow in late November when matches were being played, followed by balmy temperatures in January with the competition idle. And the idea that it is a rest for the players does not hold much water either, with Basle, for example, playing nine friendlies in January.

These days, Switzerland tends to be a stepping stone for players from South America and Africa with one eye on a bigger European league, so it was no surprise that two of the most prominent foreigners left in January, with Young Boys' Ivorian striker Seydou Doumbia joining CSKA Moscow and Basle's Ghana full-back Samuel Inkoom moving to Dnipro Dnipropetrovsk of Ukraine.

Meanwhile, promising Swiss players continue to depart at an increasingly young age – often to disappear into the reserve teams at their new clubs – and then come back to play out their careers, or to try to revive them if things did not work out abroad.

With the season following the usual script, it was only Basle's attentions being diverted by European competition that allowed anyone else a shot at top spot.

Lucerne, who finished third the previous season, took up the early running and led the table by one point from Basle at the halfway mark before fading badly after the break. With winter out the way, the contest turned into a two-horse race between Basle and their old rivals Zurich, who enjoyed a revival under coach Urs Fischer after last term's mid-table effort.

The final meeting of the big two came with four games to go and a 2-2 draw at Zurich's Letzigrund left the home side top on goal difference. But they blew their title hopes in the next game, losing 3-1 to local rivals Grasshopper while Basle thrashed Thun 5-1.

Although Basle were held 0-0 by relegated St Gallen, they only needed a point against Lucerne on the final day – and that was never in doubt after Alexander Frei's sixth-minute opener put them on the way to a 3-0 victory. Frei, who announced his international retirement after scoring an all-time record 42 goals for Switzerland, finished the campaign as the league's top scorer with 27.

St Gallen, who had to be rescued from impending bankruptcy by a group of local businessmen, went into their final game in ninth place but lost 4-2 at Young Boys to finish bottom behind Bellinzona, who beat Grasshopper 2-0.

Bellinzona's reprieve, however, was only temporary as they lost 3-2 on aggregate in a relegation play-off with Challenge League runners-up Servette, who join second tier winners Lausanne-Sport in the top flight.

Basle and Zurich will compete in the Champions League, and Europa League qualifiers Young Boys and Thun will be joined by Sion, who beat Neuchatel Xamax 2-0 in the Swiss Cup Final.

Brian Homewood

For final league table, see page 110

PLAYER OF THE SEASON
MAURO LUSTRINELLI
(Bellinzona)
At the age of 35, he finished third in the league scoring chart with 14 goals, despite his side finishing ninth and being relegated.

NEWCOMER OF THE SEASON
GRANIT XHAKA (Basle)
Born in Kosovo, he won his first Switzerland cap against England.

COACH OF THE SEASON
THORSTEN FINK (Basle)
The former Bayern Munich midfielder picked up his third trophy in two seasons with Basle, having done the double last year.

Still among the goals...Lustrinelli

Top table battle...Basle striker Frei (left) gets in a shot despite the attentions of Zurich's Heinz Barmettler during their 2-2 draw